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Agenda 2030: Challenges for us all

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Our contributors

In this issue

Since 1948, the *UNESCO Courier* has served as a platform for international debates on issues that concern the entire planet. This first issue of 2017, which marks the *Courier*'s revival after a five-year break, is no exception to the rule: experts, public figures, artists and journalists from around the world have come together to discuss topical issues.

Climate change and sustainable energy (p. 23), the future of cities and Smart Cities (p. 15), access to water and the state of groundwater (p. 19), educational policies and the importance they give to girls (p. 8), new technologies and their role in establishing efficient democratic institutions (p. 27), alliances and partnerships that must be forged to advance towards a better world (p. 31) – these are some of the subjects that constitute the main dossier, Wide angle, of this issue dedicated to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNESCO is closely associated with the development and implementation of this international road map that aims to achieve the seventeen objectives established by the UN, which is convinced that culture, though officially absent from the SDGs, is at the heart of sustainable development policies (p. 12). Elyx, the jovial character created by Yacine Ait Kaci (YAK) and designated virtual ambassador of the UN, supports the *Courier* in its mission to make palpable the different realities around the world. These are illustrated by a number of SDGs and highlight the players who participate in achieving this agenda for everyone. These include the international community, states, civil society, local communities and authorities, the private sector, and the partnerships that these players set up between each other.

The Ideas section, which is dedicated to another highly topical issue – the current perception of Islam – suggests considering a reinterpretation of the Koran (p. 42) and the sharia (p. 48). This issue of the *Courier* also features a reference text on the Different Aspects of Islamic Culture. Launched in 1977, in the wake of a monumental work produced by UNESCO Publishing on general and regional histories, this comprehensive work was completed in November 2016, with the publication of two volumes that constitute an important contribution to the current debate on Islam.

In the Current affairs section for the April-June 2017 quarter, the *Courier* will celebrate the launch of the World Book Capital programme in Conakry on 23 April (p. 70) and the International Jazz Day, with the Cuban pianist Chucho Valdés (p. 58) on 30 April in Havana. The *Courier* will also participate in the celebration of several other international days such as the World Press Freedom Day on 3 May (p. 62), the World Oceans Day on 8 June (p. 65), and the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict on 19 June (p. 61).

This issue of the *Courier* also invites you to delve into the peculiar and largely unknown world of Jeju Island's *haenyeo*, the women divers from the Republic of Korea. Discover, through the stunning images in the Zoom section, the exceptional destinies of these extraordinary women (p. 36).

We hope you enjoy reading this issue!

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Editorial

"Rotation". Amman, Jordan, 2016. © Pejac

Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO.
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Since its creation in 1948, the *UNESCO Courier* has been spreading an ideal throughout the world: humanity united in its diversity around universal values and fundamental rights, strong in the wealth of its cultures, knowledge and accomplishments.

The *UNESCO Courier* is a key element of UNESCO's identity as well as one of the most powerful tools for its humanistic mandate. In 1988, Sandy Koffler, the founder and first managing editor of the journal, said that: "Of all the journals published by the United Nations and its specialised institutions, the *UNESCO Courier* has always occupied first place for the number of its readers and the range of its audience." Throughout all the continents and for seventy years, the *Courier* has embodied UNESCO's mission: building peace in the minds of men and women by disseminating knowledge and cultures, the free flow of ideas and information by word and image, to help strengthen mutual understanding, the spirit of tolerance, informed debate, and peace. The reappearance of this historic journal in 2017, through the generous support of the People's Republic of China, is much more than the resumption of an editorial endeavour: it is a valuable opportunity to renew our commitment to the *Courier*'s founding values.

The publication of this issue marking the relaunch of the *UNESCO Courier* is particularly fitting, given that it falls within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that the United Nations adopted in September 2015. This new agenda represents a turning point towards a more humanistic attitude in global development policies, relying on people's capacities to respond to the challenges of peace and climate change through education, science and culture, which is an underlying element of each of the objectives of sustainable development.

We are convinced that in a world full of limitations – in terms of our resources and our means – humanity can count on the renewable resources of its intelligence, creativity and ingenuity. This wealth, fostered by the moral requirement to respect the rights and dignity of each individual, represents an infinite source of progress. To unlock this potential, we must also help raise awareness of the creative wealth of humanity, and the *Courier* can contribute to this by circulating words of peace, trust and intelligence in response to the discourse of hatred, fear and rejection that currently spreads so easily on the internet and on the streets. The *UNESCO Courier* is also a powerful tool of this fundamental aspiration, and I call upon all UNESCO Member States and partners, and first and foremost all intellectuals, artists and experts, to make their voices heard by enriching the pages of this *Courier*, which has inspired so many generations of readers and will continue to do so for a long time.

Irina Bokova

Wide angle

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Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization
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STRONG INSTITUTIONS
UNESCO
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Agenda 2030: Challenges for us all

UNESCO and the SDGs

Adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the new global agenda, aimed at improving the lives of people everywhere by 2030.

The SDGs comprise seventeen ambitious, interdependent goals based on core concepts such as inclusion, integration and universality. These goals are beacons for governments as well as the private sector, civil society, and even individual citizens, so they can all participate in this common project that aims to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and guarantee prosperity for all.

As an active member of this global coalition, UNESCO contributes more specifically to the implementation of nine SDGs in the areas for which its expertise and leadership are recognized. Although none of the objectives are specifically attributed to culture, its role is considered a key factor in the implementation of the entire Agenda.

Against the backdrop of poverty eradication (SDG 1) and inequality reduction (SDG 10), and based on partnerships for SDG achievement (SDG 17), the Organization is notably in charge of coordinating the 2030 Education agenda, aimed at fair and inclusive quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4).

Throughout all its programmes, UNESCO is intensifying its efforts to advance gender equality and empower women and girls (SDG 5) in terms of access to education, the participation of women in decision-making (especially in science), the promotion of women as agents of social change, and in the fight against violence towards women.

With the help of its research programmes on water-resource management and on scientific and technological capacity-building, the Organization is improving secure access to drinking water (SDG 6) and participating in the recognition of science, technology and innovation in sustainable development (SDG 9). It promotes better knowledge of the oceans, participates in strengthening capacities to sustainably manage oceans and coastlines (SDG 14); supports the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity as well as the management of natural resources, through world heritage sites and biosphere reserves (SDG 15). It also supports efforts to adapt to and mitigate climate change (SDG 13).

UNESCO actively participates in the creation of inclusive, safe and resilient cities, targeting, among other things, the conservation of humanity's cultural and natural heritage (SDG 11). The Organization is also working to ensure public access to information, the safety of journalists, and the promotion of good governance and the rule of law (SDG 16).

Peng Liyuan: "The equality of opportunity is fundamental"

China is according the highest priority to education for all, whether in the framework of its national policy or its international development assistance. Guaranteeing gender equality – in access and treatment in schools, in continuing education and professional integration – is at the heart of the convictions held by Ms. Peng Liyuan, First Lady of the People's Republic of China and UNESCO's Special Envoy for the Advancement of Girls' and Women's Education, and a professor herself.

Interview by Jasmina Šopova

Madam Professor, your action in favour of gender equality in education is universally recognized today. How long have you been on this path and what was your initial personal motivation?

My passion for education has a lot to do with my father. Back in the 1950s, education was woefully lacking in rural China. Many people, women in particular, were illiterate. My father was the headmaster of a night school in his village, in charge of the literacy programme. He devoted himself entirely to the job. With his help, many villagers learned to write their names and read newspapers and books for the first time. The best thing was that some mothers, after attending my father's school, were able to teach their children to read and write. Ever since I was a little girl, I have been inspired by my father, even more so after I became a teacher and mother myself.

Gender inequality is deeply entrenched in every society. Women remain the vulnerable group in many places and account for 70% of the world's population living in poverty. Nearly two- thirds of illiterate adults are women. More girls drop out of school than boys. Women often lack the ability to take their destiny into their own hands and have to endure many hardships in life. Women, more than anyone else, aspire for equality and respect. All these factors have prompted me to do what I can to promote girls' and women's education.

As UNESCO Special Envoy for the Advancement of Girls' and Women's Education, what is your vision of education aimed at reducing gender inequalities?

Girls' and women's education is a lofty and important cause. At the UNESCO Headquarters in March 2014, I received from Director-General Bokova the certificate of UNESCO Special Envoy for the Advancement of Girls' and Women's Education. It was a great honour and a tremendous responsibility. Ensuring that women and men have an equal opportunity to realize their potential is essential to driving social progress, gender equality and sustainable development. In this context, education has a key role to play. Equality of education includes equality of opportunity, process and outcomes. Our goal is for women and men to have equal access to education and equal treatment during the process of education so that they will enjoy equal opportunity in admission to universities, employment and social recognition. I will do my level best to help realize this goal.

What is your Special Envoy programme? Could you give us some examples of what you have done to promote girls' and women's empowerment, and what are the results?

Since becoming Special Envoy in 2014, I have visited many schools, youth organizations and institutions for women's development in Africa and Asia to see the situation on the ground, seek ideas and strength from them and share experience. At advocacy events, I often emphasize the importance of female teachers and girls' and women's education. At the UN Global Education First Initiative high-level event, for instance, I called on all countries to attach greater importance to promoting equality and quality in education.

In China, there is a project called "Spring Bud" to help poor girls return to school. Since its launch in 1989, it has assisted 3.42 million girls, set up 1,489 schools with its donations,

The first UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education being awarded to laureates from Indonesia and Zimbabwe in Beijing, 6 June 2016. Ms Evernice Munando, Project Director at the Female Students Network Trust from Zimbabwe, Ms Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, Ms Peng Liyuan, First Lady of China and UNESCO Special Envoy, and Ms Ella Yulaelawati, Director of the Indonesian project on Improving Access and Quality of Girls' Education.

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provided skill training to 523,000 girls and drafted and distributed 1.5 million pamphlets on girls' protection. As a special envoy of the project, I visited a summer camp for girls who had previously been unable to go to school. And it was heartening to see how happy and versatile the girls had become thanks to the help they got from the project.

Here's the message I wish to send: equal access to education is the foundation for being a well-rounded person and living a meaningful life. It is a crucial factor in making sustainable development possible. I am convinced that life is full of possibilities for every girl and woman, as long as we keep our dreams alive and come up with the courage and strong will to fulfill them.

A new international prize for girls' and women's education, financed by the Chinese government, was launched in 2015. What are its objectives?

The UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education proposed and sponsored by the Chinese government is the first and currently the only prize UNESCO has established in this field. The aim is to encourage more people to be part of this endeavour by rewarding those individuals and institutions who make outstanding contributions to girls' and women's education. At the first awards ceremony in Beijing in 2016, I met with the laureates from Indonesia and Zimbabwe. They and the institutions they represent have done many concrete things to promote women's education, which is truly admirable. It is they and many others as devoted and hard-working as them who have made our world a better place. I wish to pay high tribute and express deep appreciation to them.

What does it mean to you to be a teacher?

China has a long tradition of respecting teachers and valuing education. Han Yu, a famous writer in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) reckoned that a teacher's duty was to "pass on knowledge to students, teach them how to live and answer their questions". For students, a good teacher helps them find the right path in life by not only imparting knowledge and ideas, but also inspiring wisdom and passion. For society, a good teacher sows the seed of kindness, integrity and peace. I believe it is important for a teacher to keep learning, stay creative and constantly improve his or her competence. A good teacher should have the ability to cultivate a wholesome personality and build sound character within the students through the power of virtue, culture and art. It is important to respect the students, be accommodating and understanding to them and teach by example, so that the students will learn to be kind, tolerant and generous, thus preparing them well to serve society in the future.

China has emerged as a champion of the Global Education First Initiative. Which aspects of the Chinese educational policy do you consider the most important?

In China, promoting education equality and ensuring equal access to education for all is a basic national policy. By adopting laws and policies as well as such measures as providing funding for students in difficulty and school feeding programmes, China ensures the right of girls and women to education. China has issued the N*ational Education for All Action Plan (2001-2015)* and monitors its progress in typical localities. Every five years, China issues separate national outlines for women's and children's development, setting the goal of ensuring equal rights for women in health, education and economic development by 2020, as well as the steps towards this goal. The government has made it clear that in all its education-related work, gender equality must be ensured so that women and girls have equal rights and opportunities in education and move on to receive higher levels of education.

China has met the MDG [Millennium Development Goals] on gender equality in education. The ability of Chinese women to determine their own fate and participate in development has been notably enhanced.

China has also actively expanded external co-operation and assistance in education. In 2015, at the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, President Xi Jinping pledged $10 million for the implementation of the *Beijing Declaration* and its *Platform for Actio*n and the realization of the related goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. China has also supported other developing countries in eliminating illiteracy and promoting teachers' training and girls' and women's education by setting up a fund and prizes with UNESCO.

I will fulfill my duty as Special Envoy and support UNESCO's efforts to promote girls' and women's education worldwide. I will spare no effort in advancing this noble cause.

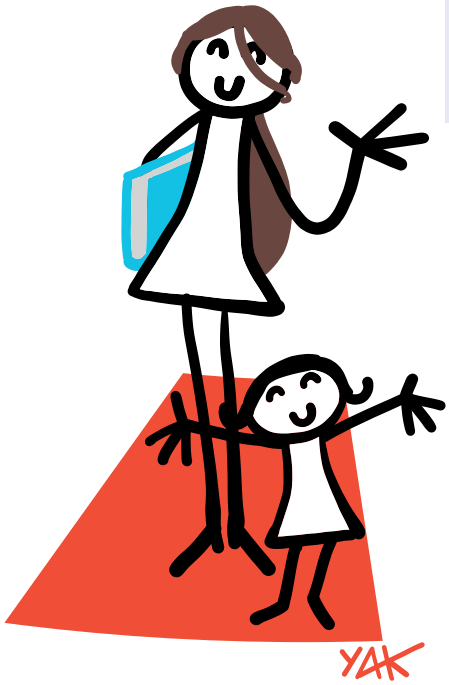
A prize for girls' education

As a factor of economic and social progress, education for all is, to the same extent as gender equality, a fundamental right. Yet even if progress has been achieved over the last twenty years, it must be noted that girls are still too often disadvantaged compared to boys. Poverty, geographic isolation, disabilities, early marriages or prevailing prejudices in certain regions of the world remain some of the obstacles that still prevent girls from accessing education.

Created in 2015 by UNESCO's Executive Board and financed by the People's Republic of China, the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education recognizes the innovations and exceptional contributions of individuals, institutions and organizations in this field. The Prize is awarded every year to two laureates, selected by a jury of international experts, who each receive $50,000 to further their work promoting girls' and women's education.

The Prize was awarded for the first time in June 2016, at a ceremony that took place in Beijing, to the Directorate of Early Childhood Education Development of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia and to the Female Students Network Trust in Zimbabwe for their innovative projects.

This Prize aims to contribute to the achievement of the education and gender equality goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. It also serves to show the importance that China attaches to the most vulnerable groups and to equal opportunities for girls and women through laws, policies and international co-operation, with a focus on ensuring their independence and improving their quality of life.



Culture: at the heart of SDGs

Culture is who we are, and what shapes our identity. Placing culture at the heart of development policies is the only way to ensure a human-centred, inclusive and equitable development.

by Jyoti Hosagrahar

Within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations, the international development agenda refers to culture for the first time. This has been lauded by UNESCO as "an unparalleled recognition".

The safeguarding and promotion of culture is an end in itself, and at the same time it contributes directly to many of the SDGs – safe and sustainable cities, decent work and economic growth, reduced inequalities, the environment, promoting gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies. The indirect benefits of culture are accrued through the culturally-informed and effective implementations of the development goals.

The SDGs enshrine a conceptual shift in thinking about development beyond economic growth – envisioning a desirable future that is equitable, inclusive, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable. This bold vision demands creative approaches, beyond the typical linear and sectoral ones that most countries have been used to in recent decades.

Cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible – and creativity are resources that needs to be protected and carefully managed. They can serve both as drivers for achieving the SDGs as well as enablers, when culture-forward solutions can ensure the success of interventions to achieve the SDGs.

Inclusive cities

Culture has a crucial role to play in SDG 11: make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Target 11.4 calls for strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

UNESCO's work has addressed this goal even before its formal introduction in 2015. From the Hangzhou Declaration: Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies adopted in May 2013 [at the international congress organised by UNESCO in Hangzou, China] to the Hangzhou Outcomes adopted in December 2015, the emphasis on people-centred cities has remained firm and contributed to the development of the United Nations New Urban Agenda.

The Agenda, which provides a twenty-year road map to guide sustainable urban development and aims to transform the world's cities, was officially adopted by all countries at the Habitat III meeting held in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. UNESCO also launched its *Culture: Urban Future* report which presents a global overview of urban heritage safeguarding, conservation and management as well as the promotion of cultural and creative industries.

An example of this is the adaptive reuse of abandoned and damaged buildings in Nablus, Palestine, which has benefited local communities. The ancient caravanserai of Khan al-Wakala was transformed into a mixed-used public space for events and cultural activities. Such efforts empower local communities and strengthen the local economy. By bringing together diverse individuals and groups for the development of a project, they also foster social cohesion (SDG 17: revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development).
Tourism is a rapidly growing economic sector, both within the country or region and around the world. Cultural tourism accounts for 40 % of world tourism revenues. These have a direct positive impact on SDGs across the board, and especially on SDG 8: decent work and economic growth.

Cultural heritage that is carefully managed attracts tourism investment in a sustainable way, involving local communities without damaging heritage areas.

Culture for diversity

Creative industries and cultural infrastructure are valuable resources for generating livelihoods. This is especially true in developing countries that have a wealth of creative industries. Furthermore, a substantial percentage of those employed in culture sector activities are women (SDG 5: gender equality).

Strengthening trade in cultural goods and services provides impetus for local and national markets, which in turn provides employment opportunities

for decent work (Targets 8.3 and 8.5 of SDG 8) and promotes local production. Cultural policies that promote preferential treatment in trade for locally-produced goods contribute to reducing inequalities within and among countries (SDG 10).

An illustration of this is the work of the Teatro Argentino de La Plata in Buenos Aires, which provided vocational training to 610 unemployed youth and adults on stage management and other performing arts skills. Funded by the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), the project helped students to enhance their skills so they could find jobs and become entrepreneurs.

Urban areas rich in cultural heritage and with a vibrant creative sector are more attractive for businesses. Promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth through employment in culture and creativity encourages decent work. The economies of some cities draw significantly on intangible heritage such as crafts, music, dance, visual arts, traditional cuisine, and theatre, that are often an integral aspect of historic urban areas.

"Eternal ephemeral art".

© REZA/Webistan

City of music

Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city and part of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, is an example of how music has given new momentum to the city, using culture, education and innovation. Besides strengthening civic culture, social equity and peace, especially for its youth, the city attracts thousands of tourists and generates income and employment through a range of music events and a popular music market.

Interventions for human development in areas such as SDG 3: health and well-being, and SDG 4: quality education, are most effective when they are responsive to the cultural context and the particularities of a place and community. Culture is noted specifically in Target 4.7 (SDG 4), which calls for education to promote a culture of peace and non-violence, an appreciation of cultural diversity, and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Promoting respect for cultural diversity within a human rights-based approach, moreover, facilitates cultural understanding and peace (SDG 16: peace, justice, and strong institutions), prevents conflicts, and protects the rights of marginalized groups. Recent events have also demonstrated the importance of protecting culture, cultural diversity, and social cohesion in armed conflict.

Culture has an obvious correlation with climate action (SDG 13). Several traditional occupations and crafts draw on local knowledge of ecosystem management, natural resource extraction and local materials. As many of them require lower levels of technology, energy, and investment, they help to generate sustainable livelihoods and contribute to green economies.

Knowledge systems

In Uganda, a project to safeguard intangible heritage trained craft persons, especially the youth, in the ancient craft of bark-cloth making. The project also established the sustainable practice of using the indigenous and ubiquitous Mutuba trees, which had been neglected due to civil wars in the region. Such an effort furthered environment goals and ensured income generation, besides safeguarding the intangible heritage element of bark-cloth weaving.

The knowledge systems and environmental management practices of indigenous and local people provide insights enabling better management of ecological challenges, preventing biodiversity loss, reducing land degradation, and mitigating the effects of climate change. Culture, particularly traditional knowledge, also contributes to resilience and recovery in the case of natural disasters (Target 13.1 of SDG 13).

The framework for the 2030 Agenda, in spite of all the references to culture, has not adequately recognized culture's significant contribution to the implementation of the SDGs. The precise role and impact of culture on sustainable development needs to be systematically studied, measured, and operationalized. As the implementation of the SDGs moves forward, further work is necessary to build a systematic and measurable evidence base to demonstrate each of the contributions of culture to sustainable development.

An architect, planner and culture specialist, **Jyoti Hosagrahar** (India) is Director of the Division for Creativity in the Culture Sector at UNESCO, where she oversees, among other things, the integration of culture in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda. Prior to joining UNESCO she was a professor at Columbia University in New York and UNESCO Chair professor at Srishti Institute in Bangalore, India.

Generation Afropreneurs

Start-up incubators, fab labs, digital sites and services and participatory workshops – Africa's youth have dived right into the information age and the idea of Smart Cities. Dedicated, media-savvy Afrocentric entrepreneurs and artists are networking, innovating, and using creative and cultural industries as levers for development.

by Ayoko Mensah

From Dakar to Nairobi, young people are at the heart of a digital media revolution that is unfolding across the African continent. With start-up incubators, fab labs (fabrication laboratories or small-scale workshops), sites and cyber-services, and new collaborative work spaces, an ever-increasing number of youth – technophiles, hyper-connected, educated and inventive – are fully embracing the new digital economy.

This new generation has been nicknamed "Afropreneurs". No matter how diverse their activities may be, they share a common DNA – the digital world, an approach that necessarily interconnects the local with the global, and a desire to contribute to improving living conditions throughout Africa.

Dakar-based Karim Sy, who founded Jokko Labs in 2010, is probably the best-known of these young entrepreneurs. His not-for-profit organization is defined as a "virtual cluster committed to social transformation and based on a community of entrepreneurs and a network of innovation centres". But there are many other examples, like the startup, Agendakar (the largest cultural web portal in Senegal's capital). Here the young entrepreneur, Ousseynou Khadim Bèye, who created a smartphone video game called Cross Dakar City, uses the game to alert the general public about the sad fate of *talibés* – boys who leave their homes to study in Koranic schools and are exploited and reduced to begging in the streets of Dakar.

It's a good bet that these innovators in cultural and creative industries will also be key players in Diamniadio, Senegal's first Smart City. Located just thirty kilometres from Dakar, it is expected to grow substantially in the next few years.

WAZIHack Togo!, a two-day event (2017) aimed at accelerating the adoption of IoT (Internet of Things) solutions in Africa.

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From Smart City to vernacular city

Diamniadio is not the only Smart City on the African continent. As witnessed by the revolution underway, the development of many urban projects and digital centres of excellence is taking off in other countries as well. In Nigeria, Yaba, a suburb of Lagos, is already Africa's best-known technology hub, nicknamed Yabacon Valley. In Kenya, Konza Technology City is home to 250 startups and is known as the African Silicon Savannah. Similar examples exist in Benin, where the government has developed the Benin Smart City project; in Morocco, where the Casablanca Smart City Cluster, e-Madina, has been launched, and in Rwanda and South Africa as well.

Although these new urban hubs undoubtedly open up new opportunities for African youth, they also raise some questions. In 2010, Senamé Koffi Agboginou, the independent Togolese anthropologist and student of architecture, founded the African architecture platform. He believes that African Smart Cities should not try to replicate Western examples, but should invent their own models derived from local contexts. He is developing this idea of "anchored modernity" in a district of Lomé, Togo's capital city, where he has opened Woelab, which describes itself as "the first African space dedicated to technological democracy". Its aim is to make leading-edge technology accessible to all local people, a "fab lab at the level of the street".

"We must go beyond the Smart City to the vernacular city of tomorrow, the sharing city", says S.K. Agboginou, who has developed his own theory of "low high-tech", making technology accessible to the low-income consumer. He proposes a kind of digital democracy and collective intelligence that would make the area's inhabitants autonomous: "We are the only ones in Africa to bring together designers, developers, masons, carpenters, fashion designers, and even homeless people, in one location for shared projects," he explains in an article in the magazine *Forbes Afrique*. People all over are talking about Woelab – as an incubator for startups and a place where training and workshops are accessible to everyone. The team highlighted its technological prowess by inventing W.Afate, a high-tech 3D printer made entirely from electronic waste!

Culture with a strong social orientation

The emergence of an ever-increasing number of digital Afropreneurs should not overshadow the dynamism and

creativity of young artists and cultural players in all African cities. These artists are working to make their voices heard, attempting to make a living from their art, and working to improve their cities in spite of limited resources and difficult circumstances. In Brazzaville, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Douala, Segou and N'Djamena, there are several prototype projects that link an artistic approach with social impact.

The Ateliers Salm, founded by sculptor Bill Kouélany in Brazzaville, supports a new generation of very talented young artists. The Lubumbashi Biennale, which held its fourth event in 2015, has gained international attention. In Kinshasa, already known for its music, there are more and more festivals that highlight the city's exceptional cultural riches.

In Dakar, in addition to the renowned Dak'Art Biennale of contemporary African art, the Afropixel festival, organized by the Ker Thiossane Association, is gaining recognition as a platform for projects, events, debates, discussion, and artistic and social experimentation. Ker Thiossane intends to explore the potential of new media to encourage local development that is inclusive and sustainable, while observing what may define the special features of an African creative city. Thus, in 2016, the theme of the fifth Afropixel festival was "Shared City", a vast subject giving rise to a busy programme of fab lab workshops, artists in residence, open studios, exhibitions, public installations, screenings of video mapping, and numerous exchanges.

Over the last ten years, a number of events linked to hip-hop have flourished throughout the continent. Remarkably, this has gradually given rise to a whole network of artists, producers and festivals which are today helping to drive artistic collaboration, solidarity and social transformation. Rappers have become very involved in community causes and social protest movements, such as the musical group *Y'en a Marre* (I'm fed up) in Senegal, *Le Balai Citoyen* (the Citizen's Broom), a political grassroots movement in Burkina Faso, and the *Iyina* [which means "we're tired" in local Arabic] movement in Chad.

In May 2016, Smockey [Serge Bambara], the Burkinabe rapper and activist and co-founder of *Le Balai Citoyen*, was the first recipient of the prestigious Music in

A network for creative cities

While a number of cities like Cape Town, Dakar, Praia, Johannesburg, Ouagadougou, Kinshasa and Brazzaville have set their sights on cultural and creative industries as a vector for sustainable local development, the concept of a Creative City is still fairly new in Africa. This is evident from Africa's weak representation in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, initiated in 2004. So far, only four African cities (Brazzaville in 2012, Dakar in 2014, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi in 2015) have joined the network, which comprises 116 cities in 54 countries.

Dakar has been designated by UNESCO as a "Creative City for Media Arts''. For Dakar's Mayor, Khalifa Sall, this recognition sends a strong signal, not only to investors and political decision-makers, but also to Dakar's young entrepreneurs, who were already developing cultural and creative industries as part of the digital economy well before the label arrived.

The video/dance performance, "Urban Matters", by Tiziana Manfredi and Andreya Ouamba, explores the connection between daily life and urban space, DAK'ART 2016.

© Tiziana Manfredi

Exile Fund Fellowship award in 2016. The annual award – from freedom of expression campaigners Index on Censorship and the producers of the 2015 award-winning documentary, *They Will Have To Kill Us First* – recognizes people from all over the world who have put their art at the service of freedom. Two months later, when Smockey's studio in Ouagadougou was destroyed by fire, a huge international campaign was launched through social media to fund its rebuilding.

The young African artists and cultural entrepreneurs are creative and engaged, but they are also determined to put the considerable potential and resources of digital tools to the best possible use into building the future they dream of.

Ayoko Judith Mensah is a Franco-Togolese journalist and consultant. After having founded and edited the magazine *Afriscope*, she worked as an expert in the European Union-African, Caribbean and Pacific (EU-ACB) APCCultures+, at the ACP Secretariat in Brussels. She currently works as a consultant for the Africa desk of the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels.

Envisioning an urban future

By 2030, 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas. Cities will face enormous challenges in terms of pollution, habitat, economic development, poverty, management of resources and energy.

In the framework of its Culture for Sustainable Urban Development project, launched in 2015, UNESCO has published a global report called *Culture: Urban Future*. With support from nine regional partners and their respective networks, experts and international organizations, it offers a rethinking of how to manage the changes affecting cities and the role of culture in sustainable urban development. It analyses the trends, threats and outlooks in different regional contexts. The report is a valuable tool to help governments implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and especially SDG 11: "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable."

Angkor water crisis

Have the Angkor Wat temple complex, and the city of Siem Reap, where it is based, become victims of their own success? The tourism boom and an increasing population have resulted in water shortages, forcing the authorities to tap into the groundwater, and dangerously lowering the water table. This poses a threat to the preservation of terrestrial ecosystems and is causing a subsidence of the soil on which the World Heritage Site of Outstanding Universal Value stands. UNESCO, in consultation with international experts and local authorities, is studying the possibility of pumping into the waters of the Tonlé Sap Biosphere Reserve, to ensure sustainable management of water resources and to halt the sinking of the ground on which the temples stand.

by Chamroeun Sok

Angkor, one of the world's most fascinating collection of monuments and temple ruins, is spread over 400 square kilometres within the UNESCO-protected Angkor archaeological park. It has attracted a growing number of tourists since it opened up less than twenty-five years ago. More than four million visitors – 2.5 million of them foreign tourists – flocked to this unique medieval settlement last year, putting tremendous strain on the area's scarce water resources.

The Angkor complex, which harbours 112 villages and forests within its boundaries, and the burgeoning town of Siem Reap, a relatively recent development to cater to the booming tourism industry, are in danger of becoming victims of their own success.

With its international airport and an ever-growing population of over one million, besides the tourists that fuel its economy, the provincial capital of Siem Reap has morphed from a sleepy backwater to a bustling town in less than two decades. The city boasts an international airport, over a hundred hotels, restaurants, cafés, and markets full of shops. But the verdant lawns of the five-star hotels and resorts, glitzy new buildings and a fancy golf course come at a heavy price.

Heavy deforestation – the direct result of slash-and-burn farming – is taking its toll at the Phnom Kulen National Park. © Erika Pineros

Angkor Wat attracts over four million visitors each year, a number that is expected to grow.

Dangerously low water table

Siem Reap province has a deficit of about 300 million cubic metres of water per year. To compensate for the unbridled development and water shortages, the Siem Reap Water Supply Authority draws about 27,900 cubic metres of groundwater per day for domestic use. Groundwater levels are further impacted by hotels and other businesses, many of whom have sunk thousands of illegal private wells and pumps across the city to meet their water needs.

Land subsidence is the lowering or sinking of the land surface, and could cause incalculable damage to the temples that have withstood the vagaries of nature and war for a thousand years. Common causes of land subsidence from human activities include the pumping of groundwater underground reservoirs. The lowering of the land level is permanent, even if groundwater levels are recharged. Though there have been no serious problems with subsidence in Angkor yet, and no specific studies have been carried out on this, it could plague the World Heritage Site one day.
Tourism accounts for more than 16% of Cambodia's GDP, and has helped alleviate poverty in the last two decades of peace, after thirty years of strife. Though there have been efforts to curb the number of residents in the area, it is not feasible to restrict villagers from nearby communities from taking advantage of the tourism-related jobs in the Siem Reap province.

In order to address the challenge of providing adequate water to the province, while assuring the stability of the Angkor temples, UNESCO has partnered with stakeholders. These include ICC-Angkor (International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor), a forum of technical experts in various fields; and the APSARA (Authority for the Protection of the Site and Management of the Siem Reap-Angkor Region) National Authority, which runs Angkor Park. The work of these stakeholders, charged with the sustainable development of the site, is beginning to yield some positive results.

Tapping into Tonlé Sap

One suggestion to alleviate the water problem is to pump water from the nearby Tonlé Sap (Great Lake). Part of the Tonlé Sap Biosphere Reserve, this is South-East Asia's largest lake and one of the world's most significant wetland ecosystems due to its unique environmental qualities and extraordinary biodiversity. The variety of fauna and flora of Tonlé Sap is depicted in the bas-reliefs of Angkor's Bayon Temple. Many of its plant species are used for religious and medicinal purposes by Cambodians. Two million Cambodians also depend on the bounty of the lake's freshwater fisheries – one of the most productive in the world, with an annual fish harvest of over 250,000 metric tons.

It is crucial for the Cambodian government to weigh the environmental impact before it approves any project to pump water to Siem Reap. The biosphere, which is also the cradle of the Tonlé Sap River, has enormous significance for Cambodians. It acts as a flood mediator for the Mekong River,

© UNESCO/Éric Esquivel

which flows through five other South-East Asian countries, so its significance reaches far beyond Cambodia. Each year, during the rainy season, the Mekong water level rises and overflows into the Tonlé Sap River which, instead of draining the lake as it does during the dry season, is forced to change direction and flow back 'up' into the lake. This phenomenon makes the Mekong the only major river in the world to flow in two directions at different times of the year. This annual flood raises the lake level from 1 to 1.5 metres up to 8 to 10 metres, increasing its area fivefold, as it spills out over the floodplain.

One of the world's great conservation success stories, which includes the revival of several species of endangered birds since protection efforts started in 1999, Tonlé Sap and its floodplain have been listed as the Tonlé Sap Biosphere Reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB).

The 20% year-on-year increase in tourism has also contributed to environmental pollution. Waste control remains an ongoing problem, though many of the temples are swept and cleaned ritually. Rubbish heaps are a common sight in Siem Reap, and tourists and locals think nothing of dumping garbage and waste water directly into the river. Residents living along the Siem Reap river have complained the water is too dirty to use or bathe in. They say that twelve years ago, the water was so clean, they could use it in their homes. Today, the river is dark and dirty, and the water stinks, according to residents.

While Phnom Kulen ("Mountain of Lychees"), twenty-five miles northeast of Angkor Wat, is off the beaten track for the hordes of tourists that descend upon the temples each day, the ill effects of deforestation have eaten into the lush tree cover there. Located upstream, water from the Kulen mountain is another source that flows through the Siem Reap river basin and runs into the Tonlé Sap lake. Here, illegal logging and the planting of cash crops such as cashew trees and beans have adversely affected hydrological patterns in the entire ecosystem, and impacted fish productivity.

UNESCO recently launched a pilot project: "Enhancing and Restoring Water Systems in Angkor World Heritage Site and Siem Reap City". It uses the sustainability science approach to propose solutions and initiate a sustainable transformation of socio-environmental interactions in the river basin. Policy, legal and institutional frameworks are strengthened through collaborative linkages, learning alliances and targeted interventions for capacity-building at the pilot area, at the national, regional and community levels.

Real co-operation

The study includes a water campaign to make the residents of Siem Reap aware of the impact on Angkor of a decline in groundwater, and the effects of deforestation on the Tonlé Sap Biosphere Reserve. The sustainable development of water systems in Siem Reap province can be achieved if there is real co-operation between the government, stakeholders and residents. For instance, the government should strictly enforce the logging bans it has put in place on Kulen mountain.

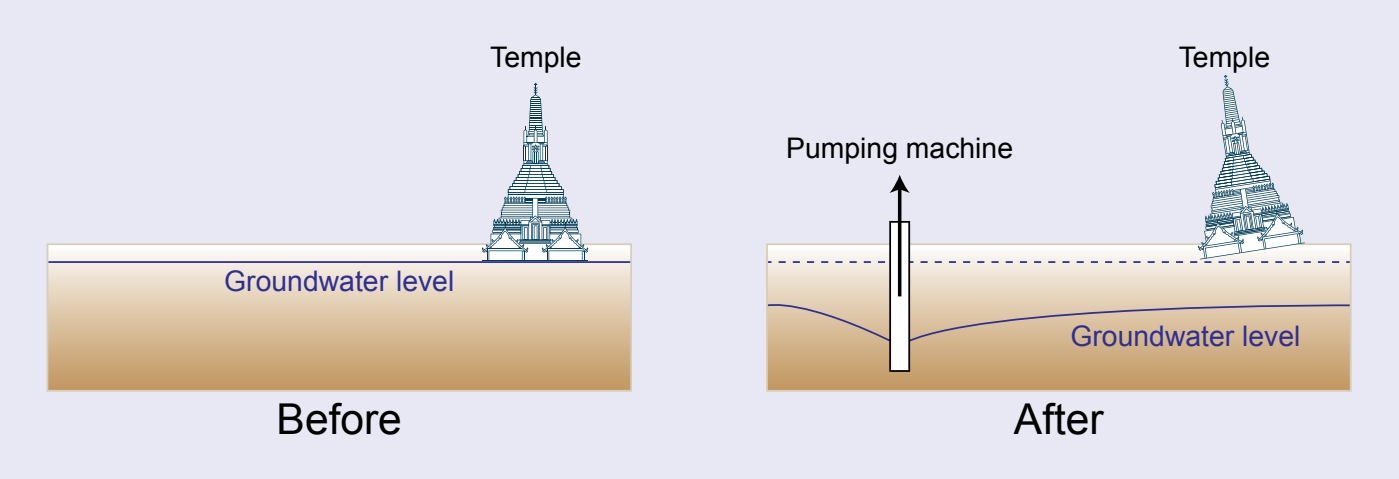
To resolve the critical issue of water management, exact data on basic information like pumping rates, groundwater levels, recharging rates, etc., should be made available and shared between the different local and national agencies involved. This would also enable water-resource planning based on future predictions. Groundwater pumping data should help the accurate prediction of groundwater use, and a groundwater level monitoring system around Angkor could alert all pumping stations and private users to stop and wait for groundwater recovery when critically low levels are reached.

Reviving old systems

People should be educated not throw rubbish or waste into the river. Another initiative could be the restoration of the Siem Reap river to create a tourist attraction and a surface water supply in the future. The restoration of more temples around Angkor could also be used to minimize the wear and tear of increased tourist traffic on the main site.

Recent research has shown that the ancient Khmers who built Angkor a thousand years ago were masters of water engineering. The rulers – who like the administrators of modern cities – had to protect inhabitants from floods in the rainy season, and provide water for domestic use and farming in the dry season, built a range of hydraulic structures that sustained the civilization for six centuries. The sophisticated waterworks included artificial ponds and canals to collect and channel rainwater, barays (constructed reservoirs) to store water for farming, moats, laterite weirs, bridges and dykes.

The Department of Water Management of the APSARA National Authority has conducted theoretical and practical work over eight years, which will allow them to rehabilitate the ancient hydraulic system of Angkor. For instance, the Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat moats which surrounded the temples have been restored and refilled after hundreds of years.



A fall in groundwater levels due to illegal pumping could affect the stability of Angkor.

© Hang-Peou/Éric Frogé

Chamreoun Sok (Republic of Korea and Cambodia) is a freelance consultant. After receiving a Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from Inje University in 2013, he has worked mainly on water resources management and the environment. He was also a consultant to the UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh on the Sustainability Science pilot project in Siem Reap (2015-2016).

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim: "Science is the basis of social progress"

To combat climate change and its consequences, which particularly affect Small Island States, it is necessary, more than ever, to encourage research and innovation, and support African researchers, asserts Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of Mauritius and a renowned scientist.

Interview by
Isabelle Motchane-Brun

We are living at a time of unprecedented economic, demographic, ecological and technological change. In what way is science, technology and innovation the answer to these challenges?

Science, technology and innovation have always been the basis of social progress and the improvement of people's living conditions.

With the explosive increase of the world's population – nine billion by 2050 – we will need to have a better grasp of technological tools in order to adapt while using fewer resources to ensure the world's food security and self-sufficiency in water and energy supply, all this in an environment threatened by climate change.

In January 2017, you presented the Coalition for African Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CARIE), at the World Economic Forum. What is its objective?

CARIE is an association that brings together several partners, namely the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the American National Institutes of Health, which have decided to unite in a common effort to promote research and innovation on the African continent. Its objective is to contribute to developing the skills of African researchers and to help strengthen the environment in which they operate. There has been enormous progress in Africa in the field of research but the impact of the work done is relatively limited and often not very noticeable.

What can be done to change this?

Often, researchers do not have the means to follow up on their ideas in terms of products or starting up businesses. Additionally, the legal framework for intellectual property rights is inadequate. Results often end up buried at the bottom of a drawer or published in newspapers and publicized before being protected by patents. The Coalition's aim is to intervene at different levels so as to give these researchers the means to change the everyday lives of Africans.

The word "coalition" is more closely associated with political rather than scientific vocabulary. Is the development of science a political struggle above all?

The issue of "politics" affects every level. Obviously, if good decisions are taken at political levels, in other word by those in power, their effects on scientific institutions will be positive. Africa will only progress scientifically if policymakers recognize the importance of funding science.
The word "coalition" should not be analyzed by itself; rather it should be understood as a means of uniting strengths to advance science in Africa for the well-being of its population.

How is it different from the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA), created by the African Academy of Sciences and NEPAD?

There are more similarities than differences. The aim of AESA is to work on the issue of health. It receives support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust, among others.

Does the multiplicity of organizations with such similar objectives risk leading to overlaps and the dilution of funding?

There are no overlaps between these organizations given that they work in complementarity.

You know, the need is so great in Africa since the continent has been lagging behind that there is no risk of funding being "diluted". We must support all initiatives that aim to train resources and develop research.

I remind you that the continent needs several million engineers and scientists to reach the population/engineer ratio of developed countries.

Small Island States such as Mauritius are by definition vulnerable. What can they do to combat ecological threats?

Mauritius is already on the list of countries at risk, particularly in the context of climate change.

Unfortunately, the number of solutions to counter rising sea levels is limited but we must consolidate and make better use of the territory. For example, the erosion of our beaches can be reduced by planting more mangroves. They provide an excellent ecosystem for fish and other marine wildlife. In any case, we must continue to plant trees as they are the surest way of reducing carbon emissions in the atmosphere. We must redouble our efforts in terms of strategies to develop renewable energies, recycling and water management because water shortages will be severely felt.

Mauritius ratified the Paris Agreement on climate change. In concrete terms, what measures has the country already taken to tackle the issue of global warming?

It must first of all be said that Mauritius, like the entire African continent, has not really contributed to greenhouse gases (GHG), but we are among the most affected.

We act in solidarity with the world by making efforts to further reduce GHG. We have already started to develop our strategy in renewable energies, to improve water management and review planning and land use. But we must double our efforts to ensure that all our infrastructures meet "green" standards, with more solar panels for example, or that they comply with any other standard that falls within sustainable development.

We must encourage all technologies that will lead to a less wasteful use of resources, better possibilities in terms of recycling and energy-efficient, low-power industries. These concepts are slowly gaining momentum; some textile companies in particular already operate using solar energy.

Education and awareness-raising remain two important areas because it is essential that the population and other economic actors support this concept, in all the initiatives the state wants to undertake.

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of Mauritius, shows off nutmegs at the Pamplemousses botanical garden. © Micheline Pelletier

How do the Mascarene Islands rank globally in terms of production of renewable energies? And what about Mauritius compared to its neighbours such as Réunion?

Among the Mascarene Islands, Réunion has made great progress and I believe it produces up to 35% of green energy. Rodrigues has set itself as an objective to depend solely on renewable energy in the near future. In Mauritius, we have already implemented several wind and solar parks. I think the future of this sector is promising and we are moving in the right direction.

***Forbes* listed you among the Top 100 Most Influential Women in the World. What does this mean to you?**

First of all, I would like to thank the magazine for this recognition. I think this kind of visibility is always good for the country. I am very happy if I can contribute to showing the world that even though Mauritius is a small country, it can have big ambitions!

On Twitter you said: "African women are at the heart of the agenda for the continent's development but their contributions are rarely assessed and recognized"...

Yes, it is evident that the true value of women's contribution is not always recognized on the African continent. If we look at agriculture, it is African women who feed the continent. But conditions are not always present to ensure their full development in terms of access to funds, land titles or training. If women could remove all these obstacles, we would definitely see considerable improvements in terms of food production.

This also holds true for access to education both in primary and tertiary education: too often girls are still put at a disadvantage. If this potential was fully deployed with proper guidance, women could really help the continent to overcome its current situation.

A few years ago, you wanted to develop phyto-drugs, drugs based on plants, to treat illnesses at a lower cost. Are you making progress?

The validation of traditional recipes is a project I directed when I was at university in the 1990s. The results of this research were given more value when I created in 2009 the Centre for Phytotherapy Research (CEPHYR), that in 2015 became the Centre International de Développement Pharmaceutique (International Centre for Pharmaceutical Development), CIDP R&I. Creating a range of phyto-drugs

is still on the list of goals for CIPD R&I, but making the transition from research to commercialization requires time and vast resources.

The work continues even if I am no longer there. For example, thanks to the work at CIDP R&I, the essential oil extracted from Rodrigues lemons found takers in the perfumery industry! Many medicinal plants from Mauritius are used as phyto-ingredients which meet the needs of the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries.

For you, power is the ability to have long-term influence by leaving a legacy. As President and recognized scientist, what legacy would you like to leave behind?

My commitment to science and innovation remains unaltered. It has just taken a different form as I am engaging with decision-makers and other institutions. I strongly believe in the need to invest in institutions to give young people the resources to work on issues that are a priority for the continent and which require a good command of science. It is in this exact frame of mind that we launched the Coalition for African Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship that you mentioned earlier.

The legacy I will leave behind, I hope, is the awareness of the need to have strong institutions, and of the means we must provide to young people to avoid brain drain, by developing both their potential and the environment in which they will work. This requires resources and I am convinced that these will become more readily available. These actions will help countries of the region emerge. History has shown that countries that invest heavily in science, technology and innovation succeed best.

As President of the Republic of Mauritius since June 2015 and laureate of the 2007 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards, **Ameenah Gurib-Fakim** is recognized for her scientific work on the medicinal plants of the Mascarene Islands. She is also a member of the Linnaean Society of London, the African Academy of Sciences, the World Islamic Academy of Science of Jordan and the African Science Institute in the United States.

On the shore of an island that could vanish with rising sea levels. © Daesung Lee

Global lessons from Estonia's tech-savvy government

Tiny Estonia, with a population of 1.3 million, ranks among the most digitally advanced societies in the world. According to Freedom House, the country tucked into the north-eastern corner of Europe also enjoys one of the greatest economic, press and internet freedoms in the world. The secret of this tiny nation's rise to a digital powerhouse lies in the pioneering advances made by its government under its innovative e-Estonia initiative – fostering innovative education, virtual business and digital citizenship.

by Mari Roonemaa

The inspiring story of how Estonia became E-stonia – an apt joke coined by former president Toomas Hendrik Ilves – began in 1996, with the help of the Tiger Leap Foundation, a government-backed technology investment body. Not long after its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country decided that the online economy and massive technological innovation was the way forward for a tiny country with no natural resources to fall back on. Through Tiger Leap, all Estonian schools were online by the late 1990s, and large investments were made in computer networking and infrastructure.

Five years later, ten private and public companies formed a strong public-private partnership, creating the Look@ World Foundation. Supported by telecom and banking interests, the project raised digital awareness and popularized the use of the internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), particularly in education, science and culture.

The initiative's very first project aimed to bridge the country's "digital divide" by providing free computer training to 102,697 participants, or 10% of the adult population. And Estonian children are taught computer programming starting at age seven. There's been no looking back. In July 2016, 91.4% of Estonians used the internet; a big jump from 2000, when only 28.6% of the population was connected.

Co-operation is the key

The keys to the success of Estonia's e-revolution have been co-operation and reciprocity. Successive governments have backed e-Estonia since it was launched in the early 1990s. The private sector, academic institutions and citizens have all co-operated to make the initiative a winner. Reciprocity, because the state has gained the confidence of its citizens, who in turn have given the state full access to their personal data. Estonians have a digital identification programme that is the envy of much larger countries – they can complete just about every municipal or state service online in a matter of minutes.

To ensure transparency and accountability, citizens are allowed to monitor their own privacy. They can trace anyone who has tried to access their data by logging on to the state portal, eesti.ee. There have been a few cases – among doctors and policemen, for instance – where people have been sentenced for unethically accessing databases. "You cannot bribe a computer," Ilves – Estonia's president between 2006 and 2016, who spearheaded the country's digital revolution – once said.

Land of Skype

Estonia has opened its borders to attract talent and fuel the nation's start-up economy. With over 400 startups, Tallinn, the capital, has been called "a sort of Silicon Valley on the Baltic Sea" by the *New York Times*. This is the land where Skype, the free video service, was created, revolutionizing how the world communicates.

It is a calling card that has put Estonia firmly on the global map. Skype is also now a word in the Oxford English Dictionary ! Other notable startups include TransferWise, a foreign exchange service, and Jobbatical, a job website that allows people traveling the world to extend their journeys.

The tertiary, or "free sector" of Estonia has played an active role in shaping open governance and e-democracy. To co-ordinate public inputs for policy debate, three different portals have been created, funded by tax-payers. According to Secretary of State Heiki Loot, "Estonia is known to be the only country where the drafting of legislation and inter-ministerial co-ordination processes are so transparent."

In 2016, Estonia was recognized as one of countries that has best included NGOs in the process of consulting the open government plan of action. Last year, citizen initiative portal Rahvaalgatus.ee was launched, making it possible to compose and send collective initiatives to the Estonian Parliament.

Estonia has also made some bold moves in experimenting with modern methods of the decision-making process. *Rahvakogu* or the People's Assembly is a good example. Originally a platform of crowdsourcing ideas to amend electoral laws, three out of fifteen proposals sent to parliament via the online platform have actually become law.

At the Gustav Adolph Grammar School in Tallinn, one of the oldest secondary schools in Europe (founded in 1631), students at all levels work with computers and tablets from the age of 7.

© Stefano De Luigi/VII

Kids start early with computers: a programming lesson at the Gustav Adolph Grammar School, Tallinn. © Stefano De Luigi/VII

Hungry for IT

How will Estonia ensure the Baltic Tiger keeps on leaping? Ave Lauringson, a leading specialist in the Information Society Unit, at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, says it's a good sign that besides the government, the people themselves have become "hungry for IT". Over the years, IT education has spread from schools to communities and hobby education. Recently, over 200 people – mostly parents themselves – were schooled to teach robotics as an extra-curricular activity. "A third of students who have had previous contact with IT-related hobbies, have admitted it has had an effect on their latter career decisions," Lauringson says.

Eesti 2.0, a non-profit organization that aims to inspire young Estonians to embrace a future in technology (with Ilves as its patron), provides students with different technological tools and offers them ideas to apply these technologies. The idea, according to the non-profit's website (eesti2.ee), is "to nourish creative thinking across disciplines and connect science-based theories to real-life phenomena and events.'' Robotics, coding clubs and programming enjoy popularity but the question of a mutual relationship between young people and the e-state remains contentious.

"The biggest surprise is that youngsters who possess different digital skills, often lack them in giving a digital signature, for example," Lauringson notes. "They haven't had such a necessity for different e-services, but as soon as they are adults, it appears. Until this remains a problem, they cannot enter into a dialogue with the e-state."

Another big challenge is increasing the computer literacy of the older generation, with many people over 60 struggling with elementary skills. With Tiger Leap, Estonian public libraries became centres for the internet, and older people still use libraries to access the e-state. This often turns the librarians into "IT specialists", who are being trained to give advice.

Cap 2020

Security awareness and data protection continue to be important goals in the digital era. Public authorities have been raising awareness and calling for smart behaviour on the internet through different campaigns and actions. For instance, the Estonian Child Welfare Union calls for the prevention of online distribution of material on child sexual abuse. A number of educational programmes are run by The Information Technology Foundation for Education (HITSA), targeted at advancing and intensifying the co-operation between the ICT industry, educational institutions and the state.

The most popular of these is the ProgeTiger programme, initiated by Lauringson. This unique public-private

parnership programme has launched a nationwide scheme to teach school kids from the ages of 7 to 19 how to write code. ProgeTiger combines the teaching of three integrated fields: engineering sciences, design and technology and information and communications technology.

Getting qualified teachers remains a major hurdle. Professor Jaak Vilo from the Institute of Computer Science at the University of Tartu recently claimed that we would not be able to educate enough programming teachers even in the course of the next ten years. He has proposed to arrange online courses for high school graduates. Free online courses (MOOCs) exist for adults, but we critically need to start something similar for the younger generation, Vilo claims.

So far, we don't have enough data to measure digital literacy. The first moment of truth will be in 2018, when ninth graders do their first countrywide test on digital skills. We know people can use the computer, but such skills are not enough to bring innovation – we must be able to create digital and technological content. Though the PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) test results flatteringly put us on top of the world, we shouldn't let ourselves rest on our laurels. Complex problem- solving, critical thinking, creativity, people management and emotional intelligence will be the most important skills to possess in 2020. We also need to figure out how to keep our students happy, so they continue to enjoy the learning process.

Mari Roonemaa (Estonia) is Media Co-ordinator of the Open Estonia Foundation, which has worked to help develop democracies and open societies in Estonia and other countries for the past twenty-seven years. The former editor of a publication covering Estonia's tertiary sector, she is also a freelance journalist.

The other side of the e-coin

Once seen as an opportunity for a brilliant "collective brain", the space for free and anonymous expressions of opinion offered by news websites have degenerated into "toilet walls" instead. Online commentaries of the biggest news portals have become a major headache for news organizations. They have had to deal with readers who have inundated the public sphere with vulgar and insulting comments for years. Last year, *Postimees*, the country's second-largest news portal, decided to shut down its anonymous comments section.

Questions about self-regulation of the media remain in the air, though. Hate speech in Estonia is not criminalized, even though such a commitment has been made at the European level. The Estonian Ministry of Justice has proposed an amendment to the Criminal Code, but this does not have much public support. In the public debate, the most usual argument is that this would go against the freedom of speech.

M.R.

Innovative partnerships for change

A new generation of partnerships between governments, business and civil society is the best way forward to achieving the strategic goals of the international community. Using dialogue and fresh thinking, this inclusive platform of partnerships would aid current goals, and address the challenges of the future.

by Shiraz Sidhva

When global business leaders gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2017, the most ubiquitous fashion accessory at this elite jamboree was a circular lapel pin depicting the colours of the United Nations' seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Far from furthering short-term goals like increased profits and higher sales figures, a group of top business leaders are using their positions and their companies to combat climate change, end poverty, seek education for all, empower women, and reduce the spread of diseases.

Kept at arm's length by development agencies for decades, the private sector was roped in by the UN in 2015 to partner with UN agencies, national governments, academia and civil society to help advance the ambitious global agenda by 2030. The universal agreement is the most inclusive blueprint for sustainable development so far. The ultimate goal of attaining greater sustainability, peace and prosperity for all could only be achieved if everyone helps to move the agenda forward. This idea is enshrined in SDG 17, partnerships for the goals.

"Fantastic increase in well-being"

In his remarks at a special session on "Co-operation for Peace: Tackling the Root Causes of Global Crises" in Davos, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that in order to achieve sustainable and inclusive development, "we need to…agree to mobilize, not only governments, not only civil society, academia, but the business sector in order to take advantage of these [the Paris Agreement on climate change and the 2030 Agenda for SDGs] agreements and to be together in a new form of partnership aimed at transforming those agreements into areas of action that help to prevent conflicts and other dramas that we face in today's world."

Recent calculations have shown that the returns of investments that could be generated by the full implementation of the SDGs could be $30 billion per year, Guterres said. These new partnerships could lead to a "fantastic increase in the well-being of people," he added.

In her first address as the UN Deputy Secretary General on 28 February 2017, hours after she was sworn in, Amina Mohammed underlined that "Success [in achieving the SDGs] will require a bolder approach to financing and partnerships. Nothing will be achieved without engaging all actors," she said, urging all countries to rethink their systems and approaches.

The UN too would need "to be fit for purpose", she added, to be able to help its member states implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. "We must innovate and revamp our approach to partnership and financing, with a focus on the long haul," Mohammed said.

Roping business in

Paul Polman, the CEO of Anglo-Dutch multinational Unilever since 2009, is the best example of a growing tribe of business heads who spend a lot of time and energy evangelizing about the need for businesses to be involved in solving the planet's most challenging problems. Addressing his shareholders, he talks convincingly about climate change: "We have already passed 1 degree, and Mother Nature, unfortunately, is increasingly starting to send us the bill," he warns.

Speaking to students at the London School of Economics, he enthused: "We could be the generation, in the next fifteen years, that solves the issue of poverty, that solves the issue of climate change." The room of eager students falls silent with his next statement: "I always say I represent one of the biggest NGOs."

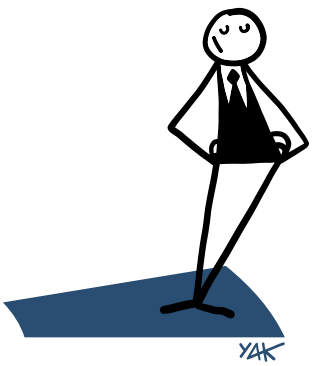
Not the usual stuff that business leaders say. But Polman walks the talk. Last year, he was appointed by the then UN Director-General, Ban Ki-moon, to a group of eminent SDGs Advocates "to build on their unique standing and leadership" to help achieve the SDGs by 2030.

The Sustainable Development Goals Fund, established in 2014 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of the UN, facilitates the convergence of public and private institutions to achieve development results. Its private-sector strategy has two goals – to involve businesses in each of their programmes in the field from the beginning, and to create a global business advisory council.

Road map for alliances

The SDG Fund's Private Sector Advisory Group, made up of business leaders from major companies from various industries worldwide, is helping the Fund "build a road map for how public-private alliances can provide large-scale solutions for achieving the SDGs." Besides providing assistance in developing business models, the group contributes by engaging in dialogue with public and private stakeholders; advocacy and awareness raising; providing expert consultancy services, and collaborating with the academic world to provide new ideas for joint solutions, among other initiatives.

Through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), responsible businesses have earned a place at the negotiating table. On the business side, organizations like the Geneva-based World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), a global, CEO-led organization of over 200 member companies – with $8.5 trillion in combined revenues and 19 million employees – and seventy national business councils, are working to deliver high-impact business solutions to the most challenging sustainability issues.



The Council's executive committee includes Polman and Ana Botín, executive chairman of Banco Santander, who is the only woman on its fifteen-member board.

"With an annual $5–7 trillion needed to finance the SDGs alone (according to (United Nations Environment Programme) UNEP)…business has a critical role to play as a source of investments and as a driver of technological development and innovation, not to mention as an engine for economic growth and employment," notes Peter Bakker, president and CEO of the WBCSD.

According to Bakker, the SDGs present "a daunting task for any CEO to focus on 17 goals and 169 targets."
In a bid to point business in the right direction, the WBCSD has collaborated with the UN Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) [an international independent standards organization that helps businesses, governments and other organizations to understand and communicate their impacts on issues such as climate change, human rights and corruption] to develop an SDG Compass. The Compass provides guidance to businesses on the SDGs and measures impact. It is complemented by the SDG Business Hub, "a dynamic online platform showcasing business insights, emerging tools and resources in this space," adds Bakker.

Unlikely allies

As Unilever has demonstrated, the conglomerate's commitment to sustainability and a new kind

Shadows of hands interwoven. Niemeyer Centre, Avilés, Asturias, Spain.

© Julio Calvo/Millennium Images, UK

of capitalism has actually paid off. "Constructive partnerships with smallholder farmers have helped to make the company's supply chains more efficient and resilient," writes Jack Nelson, an investment analyst at Stewart Investors, in the *Financial Times*.

At the first-ever Global Festival of Idea for Sustainability held in early March 2017 in Bonn, Germany, UN SDG Advocate Alaa Murabit, the Canadian physician and founder of Voice of Libyan Women, underlined the importance of partnership and co-operation between "unlikely allies", working together to achieve the global goals agenda for all humankind.

While the 2030 Agenda calls for a new and revitalized global partnership approach, traditional PPPs, a contractual collaboration between public and private actors, have been promoted by the World Bank for more than thirty years, typically to fill financing gaps for public infrastructure projects. "There is a need to progress from PPP to "ABC", where Administration, Business, and Civil society are partners on an equal footing," says Louis Meuleman, an academic and founding member of Public Strategy for Sustainable Development (PS4SD), along with Ingeborg Niestroy, his wife.

"SDG partnerships should have the serious and operational involvement of civil society," stresses Meuleman. "ABC partnerships would therefore require a reorientation of goals of all three parties. For administrative partners, the goal could be to achieve concrete targets in alliance with societal partners while achieving mutual gains, instead of cost-saving or downsizing government. For business partners, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) could become an integrated objective, besides creating added value," he adds.

According to Meuleman, "adding civil society to PPP as an afterthought is not enough; putting wings on a car doesn't ensure that it will fly – it is still a car!"

Fresh approach needed

Critics of PPPs have warned that traditional PPPs will not work in the context of the 2030 Agenda, which calls for the inclusion of a fourth P, or "People-first" PPPs. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)'s International PPP Centre of Excellence supports

"People-first" PPPs, which includes engaging with stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue while building the capacity of the public and private sectors to deliver such projects. Besides being economically viable, the projects should have an economic transformational impact.

"PPPs are not a simple panacea or a "silver bullet" to fill the huge financial gap in infrastructure investment," insists Anis Chowdhury, an Australian [born Bangladeshi] academic, and former chief of multi-stakeholder engagement and outreach, UN-DESA (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), and co-author of a DESA working paper on "Public-Private Partnerships and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Fit for Purpose?".

"To ensure that PPPs are an effective instrument of delivery of important services, such as infrastructure, it is critical that countries have an institutional capacity to create, manage and evaluate PPPs, especially in relation to other possible sources of funding," Chowdhury says. "For many developing countries, this would require assistance from the international community in the form of technical support and capacity-building."

Three glass spheres reflecting the same reality. © Nilu Izadi/Millennium Images, UK

Zoom

Her Kyungsuk, Hamo Jeju 2014.

© Hyung S. Kim

Kim Julja, Dodu Jeju 2013
© Hyung S. Kim

Kang Sunok, Hamo Jeju 2014.
© Hyung S. Kim

The *haenyeo*: living legends of Jeju

Text: Katerina Markelova
Photos: Hyung-sun Kim and Haenyeo Museum

The photographs are amazing. Women divers over 60, wearing old-fashioned diving suits stare at the camera lens. These rare images do not fail to raise questions: "Her face looks like she's going to take a deep breath at any moment […]. The person is a *haenyeo*," Hyung-Sun Kim says, not without emotion. He has long observed "the drops of water [falling] from the surface of her [the sea women's] diving suit, which is greasy like the skin of marine animals".

This South Korean photographer has been to Jeju Island – located just off the southern shores of the Republic of Korea – several times between 2012 and 2014, to photograph the *haenyeo*. These women dive as deep as ten metres underwater without oxygen masks to gather seafood. This particular form of diving is called *muljil*. In the daily lives of *haenyeo*, the term refers to seven hours of free-diving per day, ninety days a year, all year round.

The photographer chose to take these women out of their context by presenting them in front of a white canvas. Their pictures were taken as they emerged from the water after the *muljil*. "There is no ocean [which] is their workplace, [or] shoreline where seafood is scattered from their net bags. There is just a *haenyeo*," explains Kim. Free of any disruptive visual elements, the spectator is able to concentrate on the faces and bodies in the photographs which, according to the photographer, are authentic "illustrated guides to *haenyeo*". These photographic guides testify to the difficult living conditions of these women who are seen as the symbols of Jeju Island.

This extraordinary phenomenon – which emerged in a Confucian society centred on men – the culture of Jeju *haenyeo* was inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2016. Its inscription contributes to improving the status of women in the community and to ecology with its environmentally-friendly fishing methods. The community, organized into fishing co-operatives, prohibits the use of modern technologies to avoid overfishing.

While they were once drawn to the sea because of the island's arid volcanic soil which was unfit for large-scale agriculture, the women are now turning towards other sectors, such as the booming tourism industry. Of Jeju Island's 600,000 inhabitants, only 4,500 women still practice underwater fishing. There are 2,500 divers who are still truly active and the vast majority of these are over the age of 60, according to the *New Yorker*. Since the 1970s, the work of the *haenyeo* is no longer an imperative; it has now become a conscious choice.

With the intention of preserving this rich heritage, local authorities have put in place a series of measures, the most appreciated of which are free medical coverage since 2002 and the free distribution of diving suits.

"The sea's water surface is a border between life and death. *Haenyeo* frequently cross over this boundary," commented art critic Park Young-taik. Surprisingly, the *haenyeo*, who are as modest as they are intrepid, do not seem to be aware of the "importance of their contribution to the lives of their families and the local economy," explains Lee Sun-hwa, a member of the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province Council, to the *Korea Times* newspaper. Through their inscription to the list of intangible cultural heritage, international recognition will undoubtedly restore their self-esteem and confidence.

The Jeju *haenyeo* head to the sea to perform their job of *muljil*, or diving to harvest sea products without the help of oxygen masks. © Haenyeo Museum

The Jeju *haenyeo* warm themselves around a *bulteok*, an outdoor fireplace. They change and prepare for the *muljil* here, returning to rest when the job is done. © Haenyeo Museum

The Jeju *haenyeo* hold a shamanistic ritual, praying to the sea goddess to keep them safe. © Haenyeo Museum

Two Jeju *haenyeo* clean their goggles as they prepare to dive. © Haenyeo Museum

The marine products harvested by the Jeju *haenyeo* contribute substantially to their household incomes.

© Haenyeo Museum

Hyun Kyungchun, Onpyeong Jeju 2014. © Hyung S. Kim

"Minaret Hats" (2011), a series of photographs by Italian-born multimedia artist Maïmouna Guerresi, who converted to Islam after living in Senegal.

© Maïmouna Guerresi

The Koran, between text and context

Why are Muslims not reacting more forcefully against those terrorist organizations that act in the name of an Islam they do not subscribe to? Mahmoud Hussein answers the question by analysing the premise of Koranic imprescriptibility.

by Mahmoud Hussein

The vast majority of Muslims are horrified by the barbaric regression that the Islamic State (ISIS) represents, as well as by its claim to speak in the name of Islam – an Islam most Muslims do not identify with. But while condemning ISIS on both a moral and human level, they have difficulty confronting it on a theological level. They tend to reject the organization as existing outside of Islam, asserting that the ISIS discourse is not Muslim, and thus they wash their hands of it.

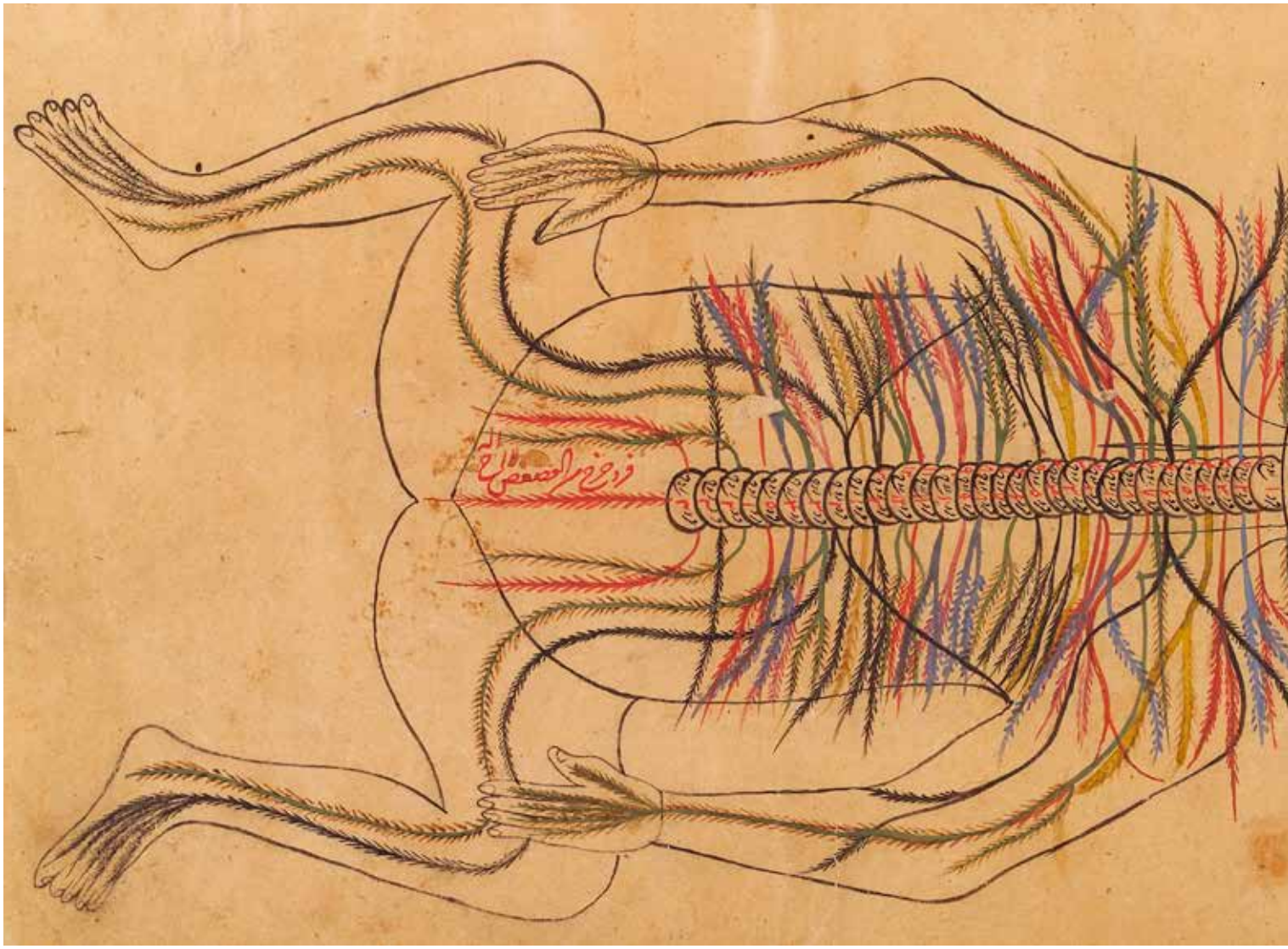
But in truth, things are much less clear-cut, because ISIS does claim its origin in Islam, and refers explicitly to the Koran and the Hadith. To refute the group's argument, one has to begin by accepting an obvious fact – that Islam does not manifest itself in one single form. In the past, as now under our very eyes, it assumes many different, divergent guises, some of them opposed and even hostile to each other. In this way, we can see how ISIS promotes one particular vision, intended not to win people over but to provoke terror, not to convert souls but to arouse our most primitive and murderous instincts. The group offers a distorted vision of the Koran and the Hadith.

ISIS must be condemned on two levels. On the one hand, for the manner in which it picks and chooses fragments of the original texts, and then rearranges them to conform to an anti-humanist agenda. On the other hand, for the way it translates sections of these texts (whose scope is relevant in the context of seventh-century Arabia) into commandments it claims are absolute and eternal. It is by this means that ISIS can sanctify woman's submission to man and justify the practice of slavery. It is how it can forever stigmatize all Jews and all Christians, based on judgements imposed on certain Jews and certain Christians under conditions of conflict and at a time that no longer bears any relation to our own.

Restoring free will

Why do so many secular Muslims, who share this negative opinion of ISIS, not make their objections heard loud and clear? Because they would have to admit to a radical proposition. They would have to accept explicitly the fact that the Revelation contains both timeless teachings and circumstantial prescriptions. In other words, they would have to question the dogma of Koranic imprescriptibility.

This dogma is based on what seems at first to be irrefutable logic: the Koran being the Word of God, and God being infallible, all the verses of the Koran must necessarily have eternal and universal scope. Hence the crisis of conscience that confronts so many Muslims today when they come up against verses that are understandable in the context of seventh-century Arabia, but obviously out of sync with today's moral requisites.



Nervous system, from Persian philosopher Avicenna's *The Canon of Medicine*, an encyclopedia in five books, completed in 1025.

This crisis is unfounded. The dogma can be repudiated without betraying the Koran's core truth. Better yet, the way to reach the Koran's essential truth is to repudiate the dogma: because the dogma does not derive from the Koran itself, but rather from an ideological premise tacked onto the Koran since the ninth century – namely that the Word of God is consubstantial with God Himself, part of His divine nature, and eternal as He is.

But in fact this premise contradicts the Koran entirely. In the Koran, God and his Word do not enjoy the same status. God transcends time, yet His Word is implicated in time. The Word intertwines the absolute and the relative, the universal and the particular, the spiritual and the temporal. This is why the Koran cannot be read as a body of commandments to be adhered to literally, everywhere and forever.

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How could such a dogma come to be accepted in the Muslim world for such a long time, when it so clearly runs counter to Koranic evidence? It prevailed only at the end of a long struggle, which dates back to the ninth century, in the Baghdad of the Abbasids.

That period was characterized by various exceptionally bold currents of thought. The Mutazilite theologians argued that human free will was not incompatible with absolute divine power. God endowed humans with the capacity for rational judgement and with creative strength, called *qudra*, thanks to which they can act freely. The Falasifas (philosophers) constituted another school of rationalism, which set itself up outside theological perimeters; their aim was to encompass all fields of knowledge, in keeping with the Greek philosophical tradition.

But the Mutazilites and Falasifas would be confronted with a growing and ever more powerful conformist tide. As the guardians of tradition, jurists and theologians became determined, in their respective disciplines, to destroy any notion of free will by asserting that it challenged God's omnipotence. The decisive stand-off between the two currents finally hinged on how each faction viewed the nature of the Koranic text.

For the Mutazilites, the Koran was 'created' by God, meaning it is distinct from God and came into being at a particular moment of His creation. A temporal dimension is therefore implied, which leaves humans some latitude for interpretation. For their adversaries, however, the Koran is 'uncreated'. In other words, it is consubstantial with God and it shares in His eternity. From that point, it becomes less important to understand the Koran than to be permeated by it, to let oneself absorb its divine nature by means of a literal reading, repeated indefinitely. And thus the text acquired the status of absolute, intangible truth from which sprang the notion of Koranic imprescriptibility.

The tenets of the imprescriptibility argument were to emerge victorious from this confrontation. Thus for many centuries the idea of free will lost out on Islamic soil, not to appear again until the end of the nineteenth century.

Led by pre-eminent Muslim intellectuals, reformist thinking sought to undermine the doctrine of imprescriptibility, deriving inspiration from the spirit of the Enlightenment and relying on the modern disciplines of history, anthropology and linguistics. Without questioning the divine origin of the Revelation, the movement set out to examine the historicity of its earthly manifestation.

As a result, it ran up against the doctrinal guardians who discredited the new thinking by branding as illegitimate its methodological tool – critical reasoning – that prevailed in the humanities and social sciences. According to the guardians of the dogma, asserting that the Revelation of the Koran corresponds to anything other than the eternal will of God – and imagining that it could be linked in any way to some particular historic context – is an aberration invented by non-believers. It looks at the divine from an external viewpoint. The proof, the aberrant idea is based on arguments drawn from profane disciplines alien to Islam.

In the light of ninth-century chronicles

The question for us now becomes: can we get around this objection? Can we show the necessary link between text and context, without having recourse to the secular sciences, but relying entirely on the religious texts, deemed indisputable by the most punctilious guardians of the dogma?

The answer is yes. There are indeed religious texts that permit this interpretation, and they have long existed. They arose out of a pressing need already recognized in the Koranic schools in the first century of Islam. Scholars needed to fathom numerous verses that were difficult, if not impossible, to interpret without examining the circumstances surrounding their Revelation.

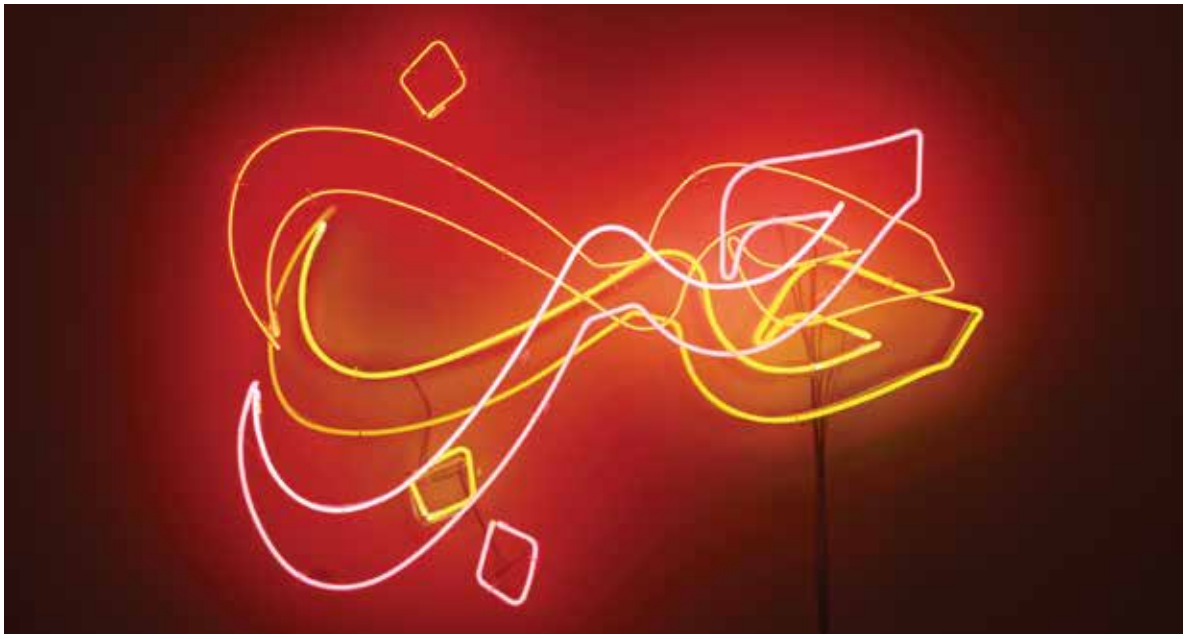
They set about meeting this challenge, returning to the source of all available information concerning the time of the Revelation – the testimonials left by the Prophet's companions. Most of these followers did not always grasp the meaning of the verses the Prophet recited to them. They would go alone, or in groups, to ask him to interpret them. And the Prophet would answer by explaining, commenting and illustrating the different verses. After his death, the task of transmitting what they had learned from the Prophet's mouth to the growing ranks of new believers fell to his companions – their words now enriched by their own memories of when and where the verses had been revealed to them.

After the death of the Prophet's last companions, people started to collect these testimonials and write them down. At the turn of the ninth century, a first compilation appeared entitled *The Life of the Prophet Muhammad (Al-Sîra al-nabawîyya)* and signed Muhammad Ibn Is'haq. That first compilation was followed by several others, notably those of four great chroniclers who worked during the Abbasid dynasty: al-Wâqidî, the author of *Kitâb al-Maghâzî (The Book of History and Campaigns)*; Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, who wrote *Kitâb al-Tabaqât al-Kabîr (The Book of Major Classes*, also known as *The Book of Companions, Helpers and Followers);* al-Tabarî (839-923), author of *Kitâb al-Rusul wal-Mulûk (History of the Prophets and Kings)*; and al-Balâdhurî, who wrote *Kitâb Ansâb al-Ashrâf (Genealogies of the Nobles)*.

The main interest of these chronicles is that they tell us the story of the Prophet's life, with the principal events following a rough timeline.

Thanks to them, we possess an approximate mapping of the successive moments of the Revelation, which allows us to situate hundreds of verses chronologically, each one relative to the other, and also to place each one into its proper context.

Reading the text of the Koran in light of these chronicles, we are struck by an obvious fact: nowhere in the Koran is it permitted to conflate God and His Word. At no time is it permitted to extrapolate the eternity of His Word from the eternity of God Himself. A reading that puts the text back into context leads us to draw three fundamental conclusions. The first: in the Koran, the Word of God adopts a language, a culture, and a way of thought that reflect concerns in Arabia in the seventh century. The second: in the Koran, the Word of God is not presented as a monologue, but rather as an interchange between Heaven and Earth. God is conversing in real time with the community of the first Muslims, through the intermediary of



"Two Lovers, Three Words", a sculpture in neon lights, 60 x 100 cm, 2010. © Zoulikha Bouabdellah

the Prophet. The third: God does not always give His Words equal weight. The Koran enunciates different orders of truth, some absolute and others relative, some eternal and some circumstantial.

So true is this that God sometimes replaces certain truths with others, decreeing the abrogation of certain verses through subsequently revealed verses.

This was the principle of abrogation, formulated in the following verse: 'We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that we bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it.' (Verse II, 106).

Thus, from that point, the concept of time in the Koran becomes unavoidable.

In fact, only the concept of time can restore the fullness of God's power. It is precisely because God intervenes temporally that He can deliver relative truths, linked to different circumstances. And as situations change, relative truths change with them. So if God happens to say two contradictory things, that is because the truth has changed in the meantime. God is always right at the moment He speaks. To understand His relative truths, we just need to link each of them to the circumstances in which they were spoken.

No verse can be 'better' than any other, if we remain in the realm of the absolute. In the absolute, everything is equal and no comparison is possible. For one verse to be 'better' than the other, they must both exist in an ambit of relativity. And they cannot both be true unless they relate to different circumstances or, in other words, to changing times.

Thus there are successive moments in the Koran, times that are 'before' and 'after', and even moments that erase others – hence a truly temporal dimension. The conclusion is self-evident: the Word of God cannot be confounded with God Himself. The Word cannot be assimilated into God's divine essence. We cannot – we must not – read the Koran as if each one of the verses embodies God's divinity, as if the slightest detachment represents a betrayal of Him.

Once the Word of God is separate from God, and once the Word is involved in human temporality, the postulation of Koranic imprescriptibility can no longer be defended. It not only fails to reflect the truth of the Koran, it even contradicts it. Believers are thus called upon by the Koran itself to make use of their reason and to exercise their free will, to decide for themselves which verses are binding, and which no longer concern them.

The Koran then ceases to appear to the believer like a set of commandments and interdictions, to be followed everywhere and forever. It becomes once again what it was during twenty-two years for the Prophet and his companions: an open discourse about remaking the world; a call to think and to act in full responsibility; an opportunity offered to everyone to find God's way in everyday life.

Mahmoud Hussein is the shared pseudonym of Bahgat Elnadi and Adel Rifaat, two Franco-Egyptian writers who have published a number of standard texts: *Al-Sira* (2005), *Understanding the Qur'an Today* (2009), and most recently, in 2016, *Les musulmans au défi de Daech* (Muslims challenged by ISIS).

What sharia is not

According to the Moroccan philosopher Ali Benmakhlouf, sharia at its origin is not a fixed code. It is a spiritual source, with an ethical orientation, to curb the abuse of political power. He examines how sharia was transformed into law.

by Ali Benmakhlouf

The word 'sharia' is a recurring theme in today's discussions, conveying an array of phantasmagorical associations: reigns of terror, corporal punishment, repudiation of women, extremist demands by terrorist groups, archaic laws from the earliest days of Islam, a set of sanctions incompatible with human rights, and more.

It is essential to understand that the constitution of sharia, assumed as a fixed authority or body of law transcending time and history, mainly serves the interests of authoritarian regimes. These regimes founded the permanence of their political power on a law that is immune to change.

Etymologically, 'sharia' is an Arabic word meaning 'avenue', 'opening' or 'way'. Professor Wael Hallaq at Columbia University explains that sharia "was as much a way of living and of seeing the world as it was a body of belief."

The process of transforming sharia into divine law is derived from an effort to interpret it, called *ijtihad*. It was the result of reflection undertaken by qualified Islamic jurists who set out to "translate" the Koranic verses into legal norms.

A century after the Koran was revealed, numerous law schools were founded throughout the Islamic world, and they had different ways of evaluating divine law. Yet, whatever their interpretations and the differences among various lawyers and philosophers, all the schools agreed that the sacred texts of Islam were merely sources, and not the actual content, of the law. They emphasized the fact that the divine law was not to be found in its complete form in the revealed texts. In other words, there is no sharia code as such. It is not to be found either in the sayings of the Prophet, or in the Koran.

In more recent times, the Egyptian theologian, Ali Abderrazik (1888–1966), has drawn our attention to the fact that sharia is a spiritual guide, without any legal directives. Therefore, it is left to people to constitute their own system – based on other foundations – to organize their communities.

Sharia and politics

During the Middle Ages, a great debate began that still has significance today. It involved two opposing currents of thought. On the one hand, there were those who believed that the word sharia should be infused with political meaning, giving it legislative stature. Judges would then become what Montesquieu described in his 1748 treatise, *Spirit of the Laws*, as "no more than the mouth that pronounces the words of the law, mere passive beings, incapable of moderating either its force or rigour." On the other hand, there were those who believed, to the contrary, that jurisprudence should be made autonomous, allowing the judge to draw on the religious inspiration of the sharia to constitute within his tribunal a counterweight to political power.

According to this second line of thought, the sovereign held discretionary power, restricted in scope, which could replace religious law with administrative regulations applicable in certain areas and to specific types of cases. This was called *siyasa shar'iyya* (policy compliant with revealed law), a device that was especially useful to curb abusive political power, as explained by Hallaq in his book, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (2009).

In pre-modern states, sharia tended to be disassociated from political power, even if the boundary was not always clear and differed from one state to another. Conversely, in modern post-colonial societies, sharia is considered a part of statutory law, even though in some countries its scope is often reduced to personal status issues (such as marriage, inheritance, etc.). Modern understanding of the law is based on codification and control, thus rendering it purely an instrument of the state. The politicizing of sharia is a recent phenomenon.

Fatwa changes with the times

Thus, sharia is an epistemological concept that was for a long time flexible and adaptable. The saying "fatwa changes with the times" clearly shows that legal opinion was not considered a timeless and immutable truth. Indeed, a fatwa in its original sense is a non-binding legal opinion. The law was subject to modification because of "the changing of the times or…the changing conditions of

society", as Hallaq reminds us in his book *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (2001).

In fact, the necessity of change is explicitly recognized as the principal characteristic of divine law. The medieval philosopher Al Farabi (870-950), among others, has described how successive legislators would modify the law. In his *Book of Religion*, Farabi explains that these changes served to: 1) close the gap left by a previous legislator, who enacted laws only on matters of the highest importance, of the greatest utility, value and efficacy for bringing communities together, leaving the rest to someone else; and 2) to alter many of the predecessor's rulings and to enact other rules which he thought were more appropriate for the times.

We deduce from this that divine law is inseparable from its human interpretation, with the understanding that the interpretation should be left to competent experts, and not to those without training.

"Islamic law is thus also characterized by legal pluralism", affirms Hallaq in his *An Introduction to Islamic Law*. "Not only because it acknowledges local custom and takes it into serious account," he explains, "but also because it offers an array of opinions on one and the same set of facts." Which is why Hallaq finds it highly ironic that colonial Europeans accused Islamic law of being rigid to justify replacing it with new Napoleonic codes. Thus began the dismantling of sharia that contributed to a perception of it as ahistorical and timeless.

When spiritual guideline becomes diktat

This dismantling continued during the second half of the 20th century, as the word sharia took the form of a diktat via the fatwa, and it was accorded decision-making power, even though fatwa represents only an advisory opinion.

With the development of modern law, of law emanating from the power of the state, and with the spread of parliamentary institutions in countries previously colonized by so-called Western powers (notably France and the United Kingdom) – sharia law took its place alongside legal systems modelled mostly on Napoleonic codes. It is "the corset of parliamentary procedure" that gave the Islamic norm its authority, say Baudouin Dupret and Leon Buskens, in the introduction to their 2012 book, *La charia aujourd'hui* (The Sharia Today).

Today, the constitutions of different Muslim nations cite sharia in different ways. In one country, it is a question of compliance; in another, reference. Nowhere is it considered to be derived from any codified law.

It should be recognized that the word sharia is not sufficiently clear and does not refer to a set of rules familiar to all that would allow us to say with authority that it is being applied here or there. Paraphrasing the words of Dupret, the more we try to pin down what sharia is, the harder it is to capture its forms and functions. Except in terms of power, politics and ideology, how can we really define sharia?

Ali Benmakhlouf (Morocco) is Professor of Philosophy at UPEC (Université Paris Est-Créteil) and a senior member of the Institut Universitaire de France. His long list of publications includes *Averroès* (2000), *La conversation comme manière de vivre* [Conversation as a way of life] (2016), and *Philosopher à Bagdad au Xe siècle* [The practice of philosophy in tenth-century Baghdad] (2007), which he edited, and several other books about the great thinkers of East and West.

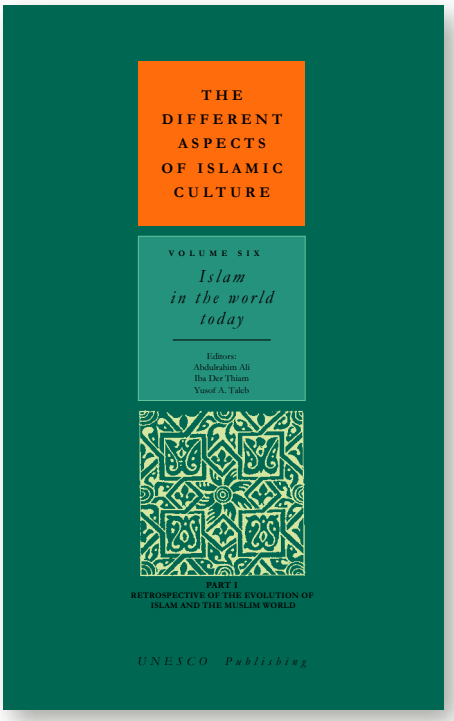
Part of the series of photographs, "Minaret Hats", by Italian-born visual artist Maïmouna Guerresi, who uses symbols of her adopted religion, Islam, in her art.

© Maïmouna Guerresi

A reference work for our times

The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture, Volumes 1–6,
Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1977–2016

by Nahid Afrose Kabir



Islamic culture.
© UNESCO

We live at a time when Muslims and their religion, Islam, are misunderstood in many parts of the world. Muslims are generally perceived in the West as a homogeneous, monolithic group of people who are violent and oppress their women. In some Asian countries, where Muslims and non-Muslims have shared the same language and culture for centuries, Muslims are suddenly viewed as "different".

Since the September 11, 2001 Twin Towers attacks in the United States, the rhetoric of "Us" against "Them" has been used to exclude Muslims from mainstream society. Some politicians have been calling for a ban or an end to all Muslim immigration.

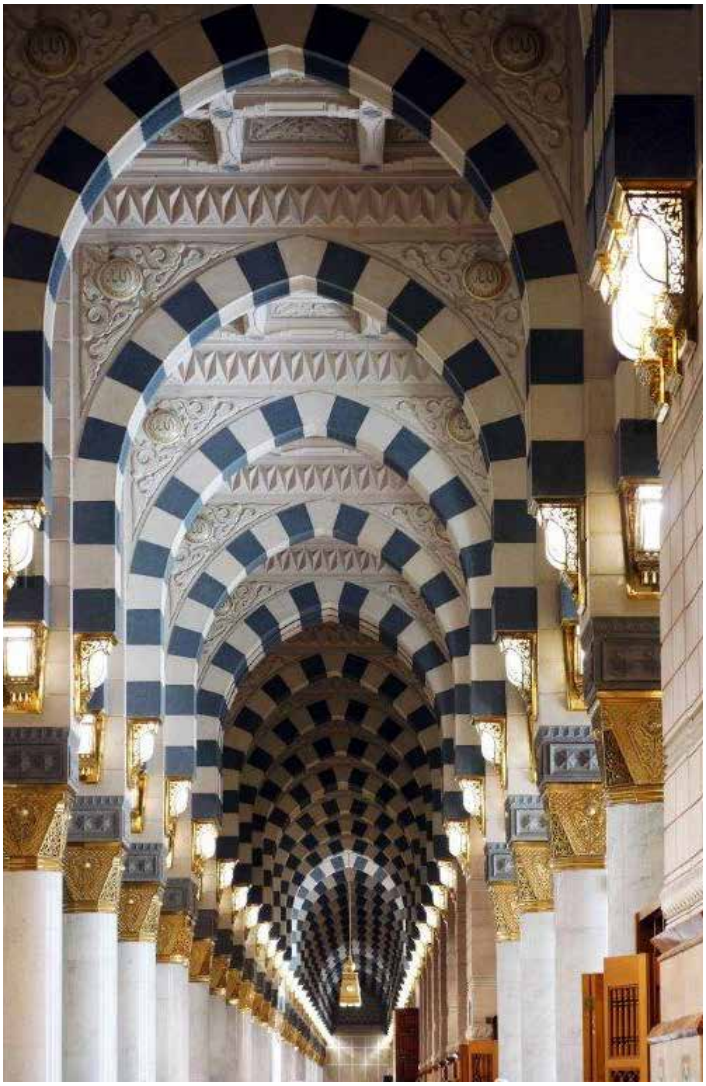
It is important to acknowledge that a tiny minority of Muslims have resorted to terrorism. But it is equally important to note that Muslims are as much, if not more, the victims of terrorism as are non-Muslims.

Seeking to dispel some of the misconceptions surrounding Muslims today, the UNESCO six-volume v, *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture* (1977 to 2016) is timely and informative. It informs readers about Islam, from its revelation to the beliefs and practices of Muslims. The book describes the diversity in Islam through its different schools of thought.

Launched in 1977, in the wake of a monumental work on general and regional histories, this collective work was completed in November 2016, with the publications of Volumes I and VI, which constitute an important contribution to the current debate on Islam.
The books explain the puritanical notions that have been generated from offshoots of Islam, and also describe how, over several centuries, many Muslim thinkers have rejected narrow, dogmatic interpretations of the Koran, and encouraged the use of reason.

On the question of women, the book offers interesting insights, notably on the advantaged status of women during the Abbasid and Ayyubid periods from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries. It also discusses the Islamic feminists from the early twentieth century, who had their voices heard in the Arab world.

The book also reflects on the contribution of Islamic civilizations in the fields of science, medicine, mathematics and astronomy.



Interior of Prophet's Mosque (al-Masjid al-Nabawi), Medina, Saudi Arabia.
© Enciktat/Shutterstock

To quote just one example, Muslims invented algebra! The collection reminds readers of the glory of the Muslim Sultanate and how its legacy is still remembered through its art and architecture – for example, the Taj Mahal in India. It also discusses how the East, including the Islamic countries, were, in some periods of history, far more advanced than the (Christian) West, due to the trade of silk and spices through the Silk Route. However, as Muslim countries in Asia and Africa began to flourish through trade and commerce, the West commenced its territorial expansion and introduced its colonial system.

Reverting to the present, the book provides a balanced debate by highlighting tensions within and among Muslim countries – for example, the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War, the rise of the Taliban, the Kashmir conflict, and the dynamics between secular and Islamic states. These conflicts are exacerbated by corruption, poor health services, economic inequality and illiteracy.

The question of minority Muslims in the world today – a subject which I have written about in the book – is particularly important. It is precisely these Muslims and their communities, and Muslim immigrants, who suffer the marginalization, Islamophobia and discrimination, as I emphasized at the beginning of this article.

The UNESCO collection also examines some positive aspects of the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, and offers suggestions to help develop a better understanding between them.

The author of a chapter on minority Muslims in the world today, **Nahid Afroz Kabir** is a Muslim woman, originally from Bangladesh. She is now an Australian citizen, and a US Permanent Resident. Author of "Muslim Minorities in the World Today", published in *The Different Aspects of Islamic Culture*, 2016, Kabir is a visiting researcher at the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, Washington DC, USA. Kabir's books include: *Muslims in Australia: Immigration, Race Relations and Cultural History* (2005); *Young British Muslims: Identity, Culture, Politics and the Media* (2010); *Young American Muslims: Dynamics of Identity* (2013); and *Muslim Americans: Debating the Notions of American and Un-American* (2017).

Our guest

Alphadi is designated UNESCO Artist for Peace by Director-General Irina Bokova, Paris, 2016. © UNESCO/P. Chiang-Joo

Alphadi: putting Africa's creativity on the world map

Convinced that "culture is the fundamental starting point for [...] development," Alphadi is committed to supporting the textile industry and promoting traditional know-how throughout the African continent. The internationally-recognized designer, who created the International Festival of African Fashion, has become a symbol of the struggle for economic development. His latest dream is on the verge of coming true – creating a school dedicated to fashion and the arts in Niamey. We met up with this "Wizard of the Desert".

Interview by Jasmina Šopova

You define yourself as "the most pan-Africanist of all pan-Africanists". Where does this feeling come from?

I am a pan-Africanist by descent and conviction. I was born in Timbuktu, to a Moroccan mother and a Nigerien father of Arab descent. I grew up in Niger and I did part of my studies in Togo. I also have family in Morocco, Mauritania, and Côte d'Ivoire. All these countries are part of my mixed heritage that I hold proudly as a sign of African unity and dignity.

What brought you to the world of fashion?

I always had a creative urge, ever since I was a child. It is only when my parents passed away that I was able to express it. For them, it was out of the question for me to go into fashion! They believed it was a "woman's job" and also incompatible with Islam.

I got a degree in tourism in Paris to respect their wishes. I studied by day, and by night I attended fashion shows. I ended up rubbing shoulders with some of the most renowned fashion designers of the time. Once I received my tourism diploma in 1980, I returned to Niger and worked for the Directorate of Tourism in the Ministry of Trade in Niamey.

And three years later, you presented your first collection in Niger...

Exactly. At the beginning, I wanted to set up an African textile project with the late Chris Seydou, a great Malian fashion designer. But I then found myself alone, so I gathered all the strength I had and created a weaving and embroidery workshop on my own. It was only later that I trained at the Atelier Chardon-Savard fashion school in Paris.

How did you finance the project?

At the very beginning, I invested what I earned working in a weaving mill in Niger. That is how I created the Alphadi fabric. Then I availed of the voluntary retirement support programme from the civil service, a support credit for setting up businesses, and a subsidy from the European Union. This enabled me to buy my first machines and hire my first employees. And that's how the Alphadi brand was born.

The brand was recognized in Paris in 1985.

It was at the International Tourism Trade Fair. Paco Rabanne, Yves Saint-Laurent and some other designers and models that I knew from my time studying in Paris, came to lend me a helping hand.

But my greatest moment will always be the second International Festival of Fashion that took place in Paris in 1987. All the biggest names in the fashion industry were there. There were thousands of models and tens of thousands of spectators, and a billion television viewers around the world were watching! To present your collection on an open-air catwalk in the Trocadero gardens accompanied by griots [West African travelling poets and musicians]and camels is incredibly moving.

The festival served as a consecration of all your efforts as well as a nice way of recognizing the work of craftspeople.

Definitely. I work with very talented craftspeople. From the very beginning, I hired more than a dozen weavers and about twenty technicians specialized in sewing, embroidery and beadwork. Later, I created a team of jewellers in Niger and a team of tanners in Morocco.

In the 2000s, I launched a perfumery and cosmetics brand which used ingredients of African origin. And in 2005, I introduced a sportswear collection, including jeans, T-shirts, etc., at prices that are affordable for young people.

I am fighting to create value for the African people, to offer them work, and to make sure their creativity is recognized. I manufacture my fabrics in different countries including Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, and Morocco and I am advocating for the reopening of textile mills in Africa.

How are you campaigning to reopen these mills?

To give you an example, in 2014, I went to the "*Le pagne en fête* [the Loincloth Festival]" fair that was organized in Togo to promote the recovery of the textile industry in the country. In Datcha, a village near Atakpamé, there used to be a factory that employed 3,000 people. It was shut down about fifteen years ago, and the workers were left jobless. The wax fabrics they produced have since been manufactured in the Netherlands. With all due respect, I believe that we are in a better position to produce African fabrics in Africa!

Revitalizing the African textile industry and enhancing traditional know-how have been at the heart of my project as a fashion designer, from the very beginning. All the approaches I take are geared towards these objectives.

How many people do you employ now?

Without counting the sub-contractors, I currently have between 150 and 200 people working for me. In my opinion, a creator of fashion is also a creator of jobs. I have always been convinced that culture is the fundamental starting point for a country's development.

Let me give you an example. Back when I started my fashion career, Niger was the world's fourth-largest producer of uranium. I kept saying that fashion in Niger could be a much safer source of wealth than uranium, but people did not take me seriously. Since then, uranium stocks have plummeted and fashion has had the wind in its sails !

You have been president of the African Federation of Couture since it was founded in 1994. Can you tell us about your work there?

The Federation was founded in Ghana, and its headquarters have moved as political situations in African countries changed. I must admit that we do not have the means to match our ambitions, but I am doing everything I can to help develop African fashion and design in all its diversity. One of my main missions is to develop the protection of trademarks, particularly with the African Intellectual Property Organization – but also with the World Intellectual Property Organization – to encourage African countries to adhere to the international trademark system.

You created a fashion festival in the middle of the desert! Tell us a little bit about this adventure.

It is my biggest pride! The International Festival of African Fashion (FIMA) was born in the Tiguidit desert in Niger in 1998. It is the culmination of many of my dreams – showcasing African creations, promoting young designers, enabling encounters, mixing cultures, cohesion, diversity, and peace. These are all values to which I attach the greatest importance.

Let's not forget that during the first edition of the festival, the Touareg rebellion was still rampant in Niger. It is no coincidence that the logo of the festival is a stylized Touareg turban. I wanted to return the turban to its former glory, and transform it into a sign of peace, not war.

The 2016 edition of the festival was also characterized by peace.

Yes, our slogan was "Building a mixed and peaceful Africa" and we paid tribute to Nelson Mandela, an emblematic figure of peace. I presented a collection of haute couture all in white and organized a parade in the streets where everybody was dressed in white. That was also a very emotional moment!

Alphadi in Paris, May 2016.

© Leonardo Džoni-Šopov

Peace, culture and development are the keywords of each edition of FIMA. Every two years, the festival brings together designers from all over the African continent, as well as guests from Europe, the Americas and Asia. As much as it celebrates Africa, it dedicates the last day to bringing together the whole world on the same stage.

In December 2016, we organized the 10th edition of FIMA in collaboration with the Chamber of Crafts and Trades of Niger in the traditional wrestling arena of Agadez, in the north of Niger. The theme was "Education and the industry for a mixed and peaceful Africa". I was particularly delighted that the event took place, since we had to cancel the festival scheduled for November 2015, because of the events that rocked the world and West Africa in particular. Since it is impossible to eliminate risk entirely, we felt that we were not in a position to ensure the security of the public and the participants.

Assoumana Malam Issa, Niger's Minister of Cultural Renaissance, the Arts and Social Modernization, chaired the launch ceremony of the 10th edition. He announced that he would support FIMA in its mission to make the fashion and haute couture industry a permanent tool for development. Now that the festival has been qualified as a key cultural event in Niger, we will be able to organize it every year.

Do young African designers find their place at the festival?

Actually, they have a privileged place at the festival! Every two years, since 2003, we have been organizing a competition for young stylists in collaboration with the Association Française d'Action Artistique and since 2010 we have been organizing it with the Institut français.

We receive between 250 and 300 applications for the competition. An international jury comes together at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris to choose three winners. For the past five years, the prizes have been financed by the West African Economic and Monetary Fund.

We also have a prize for African models, which increases their chances of becoming top models.

Can you tell us a little about the "Alphadi caravans"?

The idea came from my nomadic spirit. After each edition of FIMA, a team of about forty people (designers, models, fashion specialists, sponsors, journalists) sets off across Africa to organize Alphadi shows. This enables us to meet talented young artists in different regions, who will then be selected by our jury to showcase their collections at the next edition of the Festival.

Do you have other projects aimed at promoting young designers in Africa?

My big project at the moment is to create an international school dedicated to fashion and the arts in Niamey. I have been dreaming about this for ten years, and two years ago I was given the land for this. The government of Niger has provided us with 3,000 square metres. I am now waiting for other sources of funding to make this dream a reality.

The construction plans are ready. We are hoping to build a factory workshop that will welcome some thirty designers from Niger and abroad. They will be able to create their collections there, and, if necessary, make and sell their designs. We also plan to offer accommodation to designers and teachers from abroad and to create boutiques, a fashion museum equipped with a fabric library, and rooms that can be used for fashion shows.

The concept is partly inspired by 42, the [private, nonprofit and tuition-free computer-programming] school created by Xavier Niel, the founder of Free[the French internet service provider]. His priority is talent and teamwork. The Atelier Chardon-Savard in Paris is also helping us with this project.

Alphadi celebrates African design at the Black Fashion Week, Paris, 2013.

© Dou Matar Gueye

Glimpses from the first edition of FIMA held in the Niger desert, 1998.

© Laure Maud Photographer

We will build the school with the help of donors, but it will have to function independently. This is why modest tuition fees will be charged. The Alphadi Foundation will grant scholarships, and the students will be able to partially cover their costs by selling their designs in the school's boutiques. The school will also include a "cultural nursery" that will offer six- to eight-month training grants to really young pupils aged 9 or 10, to teach them artistic creation and fashion.

What is the role of the Alphadi Foundation?

I first created the Alphadi association in 2000. It is closely linked to FIMA and is particularly active in the field of education, though it is not limited to that. To give you an example, I organized several telethons, including one in 2012, for Malian refugees and it was a great success. We worked in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to raise about €52,000 and nearly eighty tons of cereal.

I am currently creating the Alphadi Heritage Foundation (the by-laws of the foundation are ready). This will focus on training women and girls, and will be engaged in issues such as health and malnutrition.

I often jokingly say that I trust women more than I trust men. A woman who earns a living, feeds and looks after her children; a man usually uses the money... to buy himself a second wife!

Alphadi, whose full name is **Sidahmed Alphadi Seidnaly** and who has earned the sobriquet, "Wizard of the Desert", was born on 1 June 1957 in Timbuktu, Mali, into a family of tradesmen. He grew up in Niger with eight siblings. He is himself a father of six and divides his life between the United States, France and Africa.

Alphadi was designated UNESCO Artist for Peace on 25 January 2016. The same year, on 23 April, he joined the UNESCO Coalition of Artists for the General History of Africa.

With this interview, the UNESCO Courier is associated with Africa Day, celebrated on 25 May.

Current affairs

Chucho Valdés in concert at the White House, 29 April 2016, on the occasion of International Jazz Day. © 2016 Steve Mundinger

Chucho Valdés on the piano: "I explore every path there is!"

After Washington DC and the White House in 2016, International Jazz Day (celebrated on April 30) will travel to Cuba, turning Havana into the world capital of this music that knows no boundaries. As preparations for the 6th edition are underway, we caught up with one of its protagonists, the Cuban pianist Chucho Valdés, to learn more about this special event.

Interview by
Lucía Iglesias Kuntz

Having participated in last year's International Jazz Day, what memories do you have of the event?

It was incredible. It was the first time I went to the White House. I never thought I would ever have such an opportunity! The most amazing part is that, as jazz musicians, we form a sort of international family. Nearly each of us has had the opportunity to participate in the same festivals around the world but this time, it felt like a family reunion, and on a musical level, we all got along incredibly well. I played with a US bassist and an African guitarist, the trumpet player was Australian, and the percussionist Indian. It was an unforgettable experience, especially since Chick Corea, Aretha Franklin, Herbie Hancock, Al Jarreau, Marcus Miller and other big jazz artists were present too. It's not something you see every day! We proved that jazz is so international that musicians from different parts of the world can come together to play music. It was an unprecedented moment, as if the parents of jazz came together to embrace its glorious universality.

You will be participating in this year's celebration of the International Jazz Day which will take place in Havana. Are you expecting something in particular?

Yes, I am invited to Havana and I am extremely happy to once again find myself in the company of musicians from around the world. I expect what is always expected of jazz: its feeling of immediacy. We simply come together and decide on a theme on which to improvise. Based on this theme, each of us will present our own method and style. None of our styles will be identical to one another's. You can rehearse thousands of times and each time it will sound different. That is what is so amazing about jazz. It constantly varies and the audience also always has its opinion to share. We do not know what we will play yet, and that's great. As always, it will be spontaneous because improvisation is the specificity of jazz.

We are set to play in the Alicia Alonso Grand Theater, where the acoustics are excellent and the piano is very good. It was presented as a gift by Steinway to the Ministry of Culture in October 2015, when the great pianist Lang Lang and I played with Cuba's Philharmonic Orchestra. We are all already very moved at the idea of what we will produce this time. And the public even more so!

You were nominated Goodwill Ambassador of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. What motivated you to accept this nomination?

It seemed important to me to make a contribution to the FAO, which intervenes where it is necessary, around the world. I composed the music for a documentary on the 2010 Haiti earthquake. I participated in the project because all profits from the release of the documentary went towards the reconstruction of the country.

How do you create your music?

As I mentioned, jazz mainly relies on improvisation, even though there are arrangements in which the music is written. It is what we call "*pie forzado*" in Cuban. It is a theme that is given to you and based on which you then start an improvisation. We also write the harmonies and several chord melodies that must be played, while still giving free reign to your creativity.

Personally, I practised every day to establish the rhythmic bases of my continuing experiences with Afro-Cuban jazz roots: a mix that includes Yoruba and Batá drums (of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, Togo and Benin), the Cuban conga. These polyrhythmic tones are perfect to define a rhythmic line on which to improvise, or a melodic line where the fusion of brass instruments, or even piano, can lead to improvisation. From there, all you need to do is dig deeper, because these musical arrangements are a written basis on which to then develop your improvisation.

Portrait of jazz giant Chucho Valdés. © Frank Steward

Do you always work with the same musicians?

I have worked with my band, the Afro-Cuban Messengers, for a long time and on numerous occasions now, but I sometimes work as a solo pianist or with an orchestra, which is quite a different experience. I have just recently recorded an album in New York with Arturo O'Farrill's orchestra. Basically, I do not limit myself to one musical direction – I tend to explore every path there is. I try not to attach myself, but rather to vary and continuously find new paths.

How did you learn to play the piano?

Let me tell you a little anecdote – I do not actually remember the event, but I was told that this is how I started playing the piano. My father was the pianist and assistant director of the orchestra of the Tropicana cabaret, Cuba's main music scene that welcomed many great jazz artists in the 1940s and 1950s.

When I was 3, my father returned home one day because he had forgotten the musical score of the second part of a show. There, he heard somebody playing a melody on the piano with both hands – it was me. He asked my grandmother and my mother who had taught me, and they both replied that I had not been given any lessons, that I just tried to imitate him and that when he left, I would sit in his place and try to play like him. That is how I started, apparently. He then gave me lessons and when I was 5, he hired a music theory teacher to teach me at home. When I was 9 years old, I started to attend a music school to study piano.

You then played music with your father. How did it feel to play with Bebo Valdés?

It was incredible – playing with your teacher and your father is emotional on two different levels. Since I also greatly admire Bebo's art, I learned something new each time we played together. When I was 15, I started to perform live with him and we played on two pianos for the television. I think I was Bebo Valdés' greatest admirer. He was a talented musician, an amazing father and an extremely demanding teacher. Sundays when I wanted to go to the cinema and I was dressed up and ready to go, he would stop me and say, "Your piano class is tomorrow, sit down and play me what you have worked on". If what I played was not good enough, he would say, "Listen, there will be no cinema, get changed, sit down and work." I am very grateful to him today because I studied as much as I could and I directed all my efforts into following in his musical footsteps.

Did you also teach your children to play the piano?

I have six children, they all play music and they are all very good musicians. It is not because I taught them music but because they are truly passionate about it. It is certain that the overall musical atmosphere of the house plays a role here. I have played with Chuchito and with my daughter Leyanis, who is an excellent pianist. She graduated from schools in Italy and Cuba and now plays and composes incredibly well. Emilio plays percussions and Yousi studied choir directing and plays the drums like Jessi. My youngest son Julián is 10 years old and I just gave him a music lesson.

In today's era of electronic music and digital developments, how can we incite young people to continue playing jazz?

Since my first band, Irakere, in the 1960s, to this day, I have collaborated with all sorts of new talents. For me, the world of electronics and computers are what the 21st century is about and it has led many people to use programmes that considerably facilitate orchestration. Arrangements are much easier to do now than they were in the 1950s. The young generation masters these new techniques perfectly, and I am sure that they are very useful. That's where the future lies.

Winner of six Grammys and three Latin Grammy Awards, **Dionisio Jesús Valdés Rodríguez**, better known as "Chucho", was born in 1941 in Quivicán (Cuba). He is a pianist, composer, arranger and conductor. Chucho has recorded more than ninety albums and collaborated on more than fifty albums. Some of his most notable albums include *Lucumí* (1986), *Solo piano* (1991), *Pianissimo* (1997), *Babalú Ayé* (1999), *Boleros inigualables* (2000) and *Border free* (2013). He is the son of Bebo Valdés, the well-known Afro-Cuban jazz pianist (1918–2013).

"Look at me, I am beautiful!"

"Esther and maternity: no more victims, only beautiful survivors" (www.patriciawillocq.com).

© Patricia Willocq

This photograph was adjudged the world's best picture on the theme of peace, and is part of the "Look at Me, I am Beautiful!" series of 15 photographs by Patricia Willocq (Belgium), a winner of the Alfred Fried Photography Award 2015.

The series depicts the journey of a little girl born of rape, going through all the big milestones of her life: her birth, her first steps, her first day at school, her wedding, her first day as a mother, etc.

Patricia named the little girl Esther, and chose as her place of birth, Goma – a city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – which has witnessed horrific war crimes and sexual violence since the 1990s. Esther takes centre stage in each photo, as she grows up, always surrounded by men who support and protect her. They are the very men who in reality are the tormentors, but in the photos, they protect her, and provide her the love and dignity she deserves.

All the children shown in the pictures are born of rape in the "real world", and all the women have been sexually abused. Patricia's photographs are deliberately staged, almost to the point of being irritating and kitschy. But this brash approach is calculated to provoke – the idyllic staging returns dignity and self-worth to these women, with their festive clothes and beautiful smiles.

"The series is like an African fairy tale," the jury stated, "in which tormentors become protectors, good wins over bad. An analogy for the good life, with a right to childhood, schools, a profession, family, self-realization. Not a melancholy but a fierce humanitarian statement that peace is mainly about tolerance, respect and appreciation."

This page of the UNESCO Courier is dedicated to the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (19 June 2017).

Training judges online to safeguard journalists

Massive Open Online Courses, specially designed for Latin American judges, train them to promote and safeguard freedom of expression and enlist their help to make the region less dangerous for journalists. The theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day, celebrated on 3 May, is "Critical Minds for Critical Times". What better way to achieve critical minds than training the custodians of the legal system about freedom of expression?

by Rosental Calmon Alves

During a conference in May 2013 to mark UNESCO's 20th World Press Freedom Day held in Costa Rica, I expressed my enthusiasm for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to the then UN Special Rapporteur for the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Frank La Rue. These online courses, aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web, had just begun to gain currency in 2012, when I helped launch the world's first journalism MOOC programme at the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin. Through several MOOCs, we have reached thousands of journalists – and nearly 100,000 people so far – around the world with cutting-edge skills training that they would otherwise not have had access to.

After discussing the "magic" of spreading free access to journalism training to all corners of the world, La Rue and I discussed the topic of the UNESCO conference we were attending: the search for ways to end the endemic impunity in crimes against journalists. Impunity in cases where journalists have been murdered or attacked is a grave problem in many Latin American countries. Only 11% of murders of journalists in Latin America and the Caribbean have been resolved in the last decade, according to UNESCO data released in 2016. As noted by many experts in the region, impunity in these cases often incites further violence against journalists.

In recent years, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has not only listed Mexico, Brazil and Colombia among the deadliest countries for journalists to operate in, but also placed these countries at the top of its Global Impunity Index, which ranks countries where the murderers of journalists go free.

We wondered if MOOCs could be used as tools to reduce violence against journalists in this area. Also, would it be possible to use MOOCs to train judges on issues related to freedom of expression and the protection of journalists?

© UNESCO/Marc James

A dream turned reality

Catalina Botero, then Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), who was attending the conference, was equally enthusiastic about the idea. Soon, Guilherme Canela Godoi, UNESCO's Advisor in Communication and Information for MERCOSUR (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Chile, joined us to transform the dream of introducing an MOOC for judges into a reality.

Offered four times between 2014 and 2016, the MOOC, entitled "The International Legal Framework of Freedom of Expression, Access to Information and Protection of Journalists" has benefited over 3,000 judges and judicial-sector operators in Latin America. The result of a collaboration between UNESCO, IACHR and the Knight Center, the course has reached judges from all Latin American countries, except Cuba.

La Rue is currently Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at UNESCO, and Botero is now dean of the Faculty of Law of Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, in her native Colombia. Along with Edison Lanza, the current Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression at IACHR, they continue to work together on the revised and improved fifth edition of the freedom of expression MOOC that starts on 8 May 2017, a few days after UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day conference is held in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The MOOC follows the Knight Center's model used for journalism training. The course is asynchronous, so each student can work on days and times convenient for them, within the course period – in this case, six weeks, from 8 May to 10 June 2017. The course content is divided into weekly modules, each with a set of video lectures, reading materials and forums, where students must discuss the topics and respond to questions posed by the instructors. Those who comply with and complete the course requirements receive a certificate.

Testing the water

The pilot programme, launched in the autumn of 2014 with a grant from UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), was aimed exclusively at judges and other justice operators from Mexico. We were just testing the water and unsure of how Mexican judges would respond.

The response was better than we could have ever imagined – over 1,000 applications were received, and

a total of 932 judges, magistrates, prosecutors, court clerks and other functionaries of tribunals from across Mexico accepted to the course. The Mexican Supreme Court's support to the project contributed to its extraordinary success. We knew then that we were going in the right direction, using digital technology to offer quality training, with a great benefit-cost ratio compared with traditional, face-to-face training.

Since the course was aimed primarily at the Mexican judiciary, we enlisted Dr. Miguel Rábago, a professor from the Universidad Iberoamericana Law School, in Mexico City, to cover the Mexican legal framework of freedom of expression. Dr. Margarita Torres, a journalism professor, also from Iberoamericana, was asked to moderate the discussions in the MOOC and facilitate the contacts between students and instructors.

Following the success of the two pilot projects in Mexico – one at national level and the other for the state of Coahuila – the first MOOC for judges across Latin America was introduced in the autumn of 2015. The government of Sweden supported the project, as did the Ibero American Network of Judicial Schools and the Ibero American Judicial Summit. This helped attract more than 1,200 participants.

Monitors prove effective

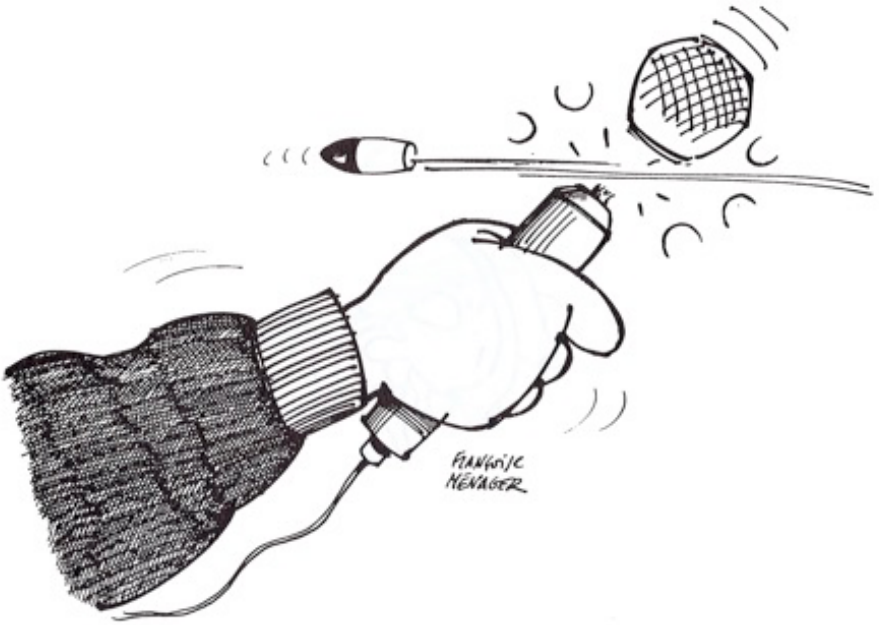
A second MOOC was launched the following year, with a more rigorous selection process giving preference to judges. The main change for the 624 participants selected was the introduction of a team of monitors – a group of lawyers from different regions of Latin America – who were specially trained by Botero to steer the course. For example, the monitors lead the activities in the discussion forums – a central component of the MOOC – and respond to legal questions from the students. For the first time, the forums were divided into certain regions or countries, which facilitated the discussions and presentation of cases and references. The monitors have been so successful that they have been included in the 2017 course.

As in all Knight Center's distance learning projects, students have been invited to participate in a course-instructor evaluation for each MOOC. The results have been very positive so far, with high rates of satisfaction with the course, the use of our platform and the instructors and monitors.

The MOOC "changed my way of thinking about the need to preserve and protect the right to freedom of expression," one participant wrote on the evaluation. A judge from an appeals court, who took the MOOC in 2016, said the course gave her "a wider perspective of the topic [freedom of expression]" and was an opportunity "to learn in more detail the importance of it at the international level, as it effectively is a pillar to strengthen the Rule of Law in a democratic society. Understand it was impressive for me. I will take it into consideration in my decisions as magistrate in an appeals court."

Four years after the conference in Costa Rica, Latin America remains one of the most dangerous regions of the world for journalists. But more judges are learning about the international legal framework of freedom of expression, access to information and the protection of journalists. The MOOCs are examples of concrete actions that can contribute to a better understanding of freedom of expression issues in the region.

Rosental Calmon Alves, a pioneer of online journalism in his native Brazil, is the founding director of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, an outreach programme that helps thousands of journalists around the world with online training. Alves holds the Knight Chair in International Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, where he held also the UNESCO Chair in Communication from 2004 to 2016. He is a former president of Orbicom, the global network of UNESCO chairs in communication.



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Understanding oceans

"We know more about the topography of Mars than we do about the earth's sea floor," Shin Tani says, even though oceans "have a much bigger direct impact on our everyday lives than the surface of Mars." But today, we have the ability to map the world's sea floor in more detail than ever, and this is crucial for managing fish stocks and environmental change, understanding sediment transport, tsunami forecasting, mineral extraction and many more areas.

by Shin Tani

The gap in our understanding of Earth is largely because resources have been more readily allocated to exploring the surface of other planets, as well as the fact that mapping beneath water is a complex business, especially at great depths.

Water absorbs, reflects and refracts light to such an extent that it is difficult to "see" through it with visual media for more than a few dozen metres. Huge swathes of the oceans, especially those far removed from coastal and national areas, are still inadequately mapped. Environments such as those beneath the polar ice shelves and pack ice-covered oceans are as unfamiliar to us today as the deep ocean was for pioneering ocean-floor mappers over a hundred years ago.

But today, with the advent of satellite mapping, multibeam sonar and other advances in remote sensing, we have access to an increasingly broad suite of technologies which make it possible to map the world's seafloor in more detail than ever.

Multibeam mapping

Recent developments in multibeam sonar mapping – pinging sound pulses off the seabed using instruments based on vessels – have increased mapping resolution so significantly that previously obtained data has been made virtually obsolete.

Scientific conclusions based on sparse bathymetric information need to be re-examined and refined. Only around 11% of the Arctic has been mapped with multibeam, leaving a vast swathe of the region that needs to be mapped in this way, to ensure that all marine activities in the region benefit fully. The cost of using multibeam technology has fallen sharply since it was first used in the 1960s and 1970s, making it a more economical proposition.

Meanwhile, other techniques, such as geodesy – or gravity mapping – from satellites are also coming into their own. By calculating anomalies in gravitational fields, this process can highlight peaks and troughs on the seabed.

However, this needs time, investment and co-ordination. In particular, the onus falls on the scientific community to explain to the public and funding bodies just why bathymetry – the study of ocean-floor depth and topography – merits more attention.

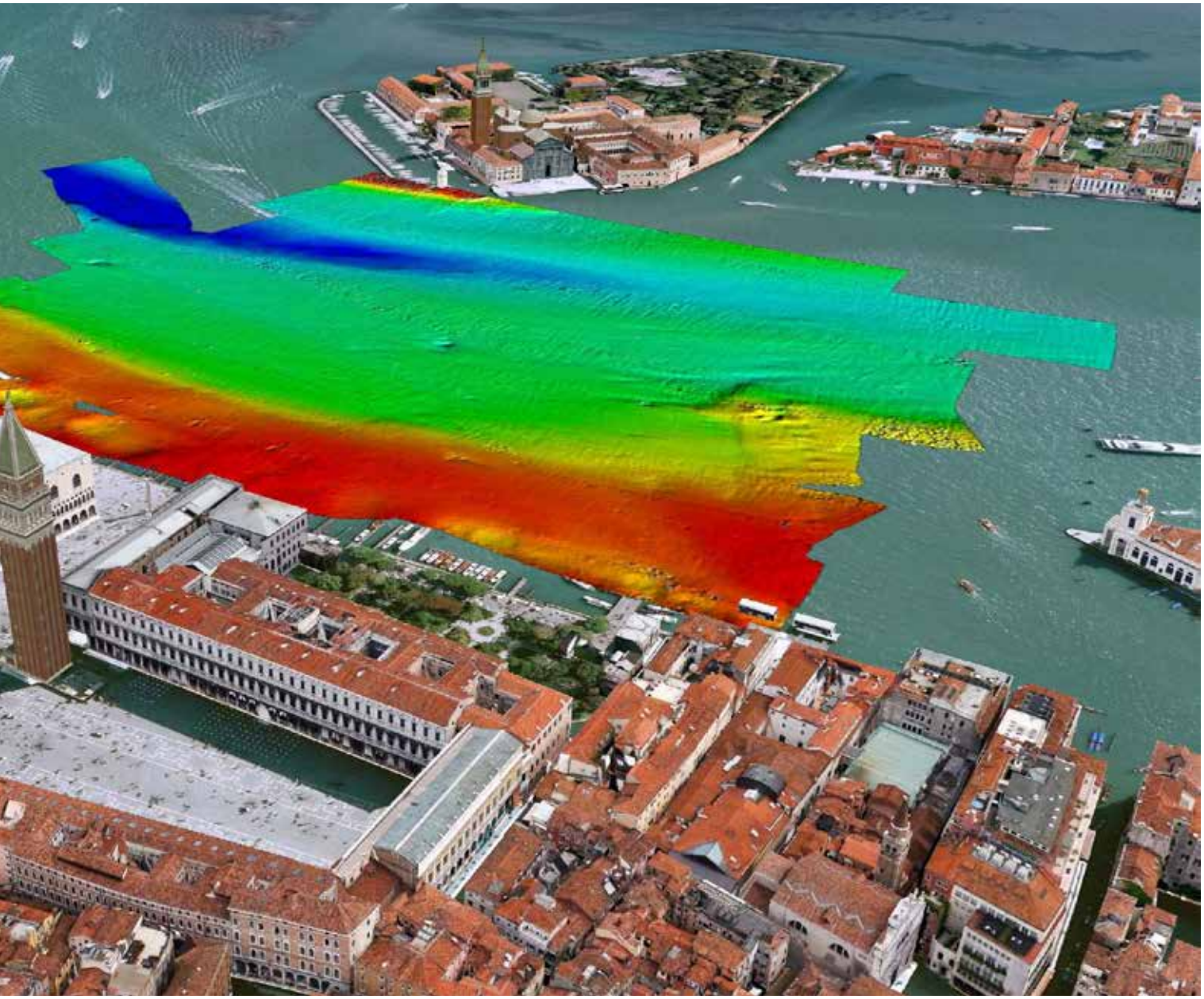
There has been progress in this area. In June 2016 at the Forum for Future Ocean Floor Mapping in Monaco, Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, Japan's largest private foundation with a long history of supporting key maritime issues, used his conference address to announce a plan to map the entire ocean floor by 2030. This will be done in partnership with the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), which The Nippon Foundation has supported for many years. GEBCO is a joint project of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO. Reasons to focus more resources on ocean mapping are not hard to find. The oceans are regions that are at least as fascinating and challenging for humans as other environments on this or any other planet. Judging by past experience, they hold plenty of surprises for us, with a myriad of beneficial discoveries made during oceanic exploration. Moreover, they have a much bigger direct impact on our everyday lives than the surface of Mars.

Bathymetry is of vital importance for navigation and coastal management, but also for a growing number of other uses. It is fundamental for the study of deep-water circulation, tides, tsunami forecasting, the upwelling of cold water from lower depths, fishing resources, wave action, sediment transport, environmental change, slope stability, palaeo-oceanography, site selection for platforms, cables, pipelines and offshore wind turbines, waste disposal, mineral extraction, and many more areas. Perhaps the easiest case to make from a commercial perspective is that the better our knowledge of the ocean floor, the more effectively we will be able to manage marine environments to ensure we carry out fishing in a sustainable and productive manner. Bathymetry is crucial to our understanding of the deep-water habitats of sea life. Better knowledge of the oceans also helps make the extractive industries safer and more efficient.

Tsunami impact

The utility of ocean-floor mapping goes far beyond purely commercial concerns. Take the example of the study of tsunamis. If scientists know more about the contours of the sea floor and ocean depths, then predicting how the vast bodies of water disrupted by sub-sea earthquakes will behave will become more accurate. The modelling of tsunami propagation requires both deep-ocean bathymetry and high-resolution mapping near the shore to provide a complete picture of how water will move from deep to shallow depths, and how it will impact the coast.

Shallow-water bathymetry in the Lagoon of Venice, Italy, one of the largest lagoons in Europe.



© Marzia Rovere

While better ocean-floor mapping will not improve our ability to predict when tsunamis happen, as they are triggered by seismological events, it will give us more accurate predictions of their direction of travel and likely severity once they have formed.

Ocean-floor mapping is also a vital tool in the effort to track and predict longer-term environmental changes, which will have a major impact on our lives. We know that climate change is occurring, that the oceans have become warmer and that ocean currents have changed. How these events are interlinked is subject to debate, but we do know they are happening and we need to address their impact.

A good example of how an improved knowledge of bathymetry can help us is the work being carried out in the fjords of Greenland and in Antarctica, where most of the world's ice is located. We have measured, and begun to see, the effect of the inflow of warmer ocean water towards the outlet glaciers of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets. The results are thinning glaciers, large calving events (where part of the ice sheet becomes detached), massive ice break-ups and glacial retreats. This process can be seen in action at locations such as Jakobshavn in west Greenland and Pine Island Bay in west Antarctica.

These events lead to increased acceleration of the ice streams draining the glaciers and ice sheets, which in turn contributes to a rise in sea levels. The scale and rate of rising sea levels is hard to predict, which is why we need to look at as many factors as possible, including the rate of ice melt, to make forecasting more accurate.

It is bathymetry that can help us gauge the sill depths of the fjords and the access points where warmer sub-surface water can get in and flow towards the glacier, or, in the case of an ice shelf, underneath it. These areas are currently extremely poorly mapped.

For some fjords we have virtually no bathymetry at all, and for regions underneath ice shelves, data is mainly obtained from sporadic experimental forays by autonomous underwater vehicles. Improved ocean-floor mapping in these areas will allow for a greater understanding of extremely complex processes.

While the rewards of improved bathymetric data are significant, it is clear that mapping vast ocean areas can only be achieved through international coordination and collaboration involving the scientific community, naval institutions, and industry.

Vice Admiral (retired) **Shin Tani** is the Chairman of the joint IHO-IOC GEBCO Guiding Committee, a post he has held since October 2013. Before that, he made a major contribution to GEBCO's work and activities for more than twenty-four years. He has been Cabinet Counsellor for the Cabinet Secretariat of the Government of Japan in charge of ocean policy, renewable energy, ocean survey and monitoring, data management, marine land register, and the UNCLOS Extended Continental Shelf.

Mounted high-resolution multibeam sonar on the ship *Explorer of Sweden* during the VEGA 2013 Expedition to Greenland.

© Martin Jakobsson

The United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14, "Sustainable Conservation and Exploitation of Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development", is held at the UN Headquarters in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017, in parallel with World Ocean Day (8 June).

Celebrating books and reading for all

Conakry is the World Book Capital for 2017

by Koumanthio Zeinab Diallo

From the big cities to the smallest villages, the news spread like wildfire. Conakry, the capital of Guinea, was named World Book Capital for 2017 by the Expert Advisory Committee gathered at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. This port city on the Atlantic is the seventeenth city in the world to be nominated, and only the second in Africa to receive this recognition. The kick-off is on 23 April 2017, World Book and Copyright Day.

The news, relayed by the media and community-based radio, was mostly welcomed with enthusiasm, though some believe that culture and books are not a priority, given the extreme poverty of the population.

However, many recognize the nomination as an opportunity for Guinean culture to be showcased on the international stage. Some are even hoping that the event will bring economic benefits, with the number of visitors it will attract and the activity it will generate. For avid literature lovers, it is an opportunity to give books and culture the recognition they deserve. Authors who will be given prominence include Camara Laye (1928–1980) who wrote the autobiography *L'enfant noir* [The Black Child], and Keita Fodéba (1921–1969), writer, composer and creator of the dance company *Les Ballets africains*. Guinean publishers see the nomination as an opportunity to promote their works, to meet other publishers and editors, and to discover fresh authors.

Writers, publishers, booksellers, printers, academics, journalists, students, and basically everyone who feels involved in the book world are all focused on making this year-long event a success. The Minister of Culture, Sports and Historic Heritage, made sure that the event was highlighted during the regional days dedicated to the development of a cultural policy for Guinea, held in four of the country's regions between mid-November and mid-December 2016.

Institutions in charge of promoting books and reading have been working hard to commemorate the event. In the region of Labé, the Inspectorate for Culture is promoting books and reading in collaboration with the Fouta Museum and the Guinea PEN Centre, which has set up forty school clubs featuring rural libraries.

Labé, Guinea's second-largest city which boasts a high concentration of writers, journalists, literary clubs and libraries, has established meeting points to celebrate the event. There have been suggestions to relocate certain activities from Conakry to Labé. These include the inauguration of four new school clubs by the Guinea PEN Centre, the release of a catalogue of the region's writers, and of a photo album of the exhibition *Merveilles du Fout*a [The Wonders of Fouta] at the Fouta Djallon museum. Talks dedicated to books and reading will also be held at the university and in high schools here.

In Conakry, posters announcing the World Book Year are being plastered on the city walls, and pamphlets about the event are being distributed everywhere. Locations across the city's districts, and even in neighbouring towns, have been identified to set up media libraries and reading points. The main aim behind this major event, after all, is to make books available to as many people as possible. Indeed, it would be impossible to instill a culture of reading if books were hard to find, and libraries did not exist.

The World Book Year will help encourage the literate population to read more, promote the development and impact of books, and make books more easily accessible to students and citizens alike, so that they are able to make the pleasure of reading a part of their everyday lives. And who knows, maybe eventually there will be media libraries and reading points in every region across Guinea. Then my grandmother's dream would finally come true: like many women of her time, she wanted

to decorate her living room with bookcases filled with books. But given their contents, they turned out to be more like 'Biblecases' than bookcases!

Koumanthio Zeinab Diallo (Guinea) is a founding member of the country's Writers Association and the "A. Hampâté Bâ" literature and arts club. She is also the founder of the Guinea PEN Centre and executive director of the Fouta Museum. She has written several plays, as well as novels and award-winning collections of short stories and poetry.

© Mohamed Kaba (Waou Design) 2016.

A robust programme

Some of the activities associated with the Conakry World Book Capital include:

- Discussions on the challenges faced by the book and publishing industry in Guinea
- Presentation of Guinean authors to the public
- Meetings with Guinean and foreign authors
- Days dedicated to foreign literature
- A month of poetry, stories and legends, and comics
- Slam Festival
- Tributes to the writers Laye Camara and William Sassine
- A month dedicated to women, francophone literature, and the theatre.

News

Sport for peace

The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is celebrated on 6 April, as it has been every year since its proclamation by the United Nations in 2013.

The smiles of these young boys in Nagpur, India, illustrate the power of sport to bring joy and hope, even in the absence of basic facilities. (en.unesco.org/sportvalues)
© UNESCO/Ashutosh Sharma

The contribution of physical activity to education, human development and the adoption of healthy lifestyles has been widely demonstrated. In terms of health, for example, it has been proven that not exercising enough is responsible for 6% of coronary diseases, 7% of type 2 diabetes and 10% of breast and colon cancers. Likewise, children who practise a physical activity are less inclined to smoke, to have high-risk sexual behaviour or to use drugs.

Sport also contributes to peace-building. Its federating role, overstepping geographical, cultural and social boundaries, makes it a powerful instrument to promote the ideals of fraternity, solidarity, non-violence, tolerance and justice. It unites people around common, universal values such as respect, teamwork, equality, discipline, effort, perseverance, honesty and fair play.

Sport – competition, championships, games, etc. – has never been as popular and mediatized as it is today. It is no longer considered a luxury but rather an investment, especially in developing countries.

UNESCO offers assistance and expertise to NGOs and Member States who wish to design development programmes related to sports, or to develop and strengthen their physical education systems. It also actively participates in the fight against doping and acts as a secretariat for the Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport (CIGEPS).

This day is therefore the opportunity to reaffirm the importance of sport not only as a human right that must be respected, but also as a factor for peace on the global playing field.

Fighting and preventing the radicalization of youth

When the internet and social media are used as channels for propaganda and recruiting youth to extremist networks, prevention should also be applied through the same channels, according to the Government of Quebec that recently implemented a strategy focusing on counter-messaging online. This decision comes in response to an international conference organized by Quebec in collaboration with UNESCO in October 2016.

Radicalization of youth is spreading and threatens the security of citizens around the world. In May 2017, it is Lebanon's turn to bring together in Byblos, again in collaboration with UNESCO, a number of experts, representatives of civil society and civil servants around the theme "Youth and Information and Communication Technologies: Towards countering violent extremism in cyberspace".

Having endorsed the United Nations' Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism which was launched in 2015, UNESCO assists its Member States in developing prevention strategies that focus on dialogue and citizenship education. Programmes are intended for youth, to provide them from an early age with the means necessary to exercise their free will and make a positive difference.

UNESCO also supports the media, policymakers and researchers in finding measures that are best suited to prevent and address this disturbing radicalization that plagues the internet and the streets.

In fact, it is not enough to fight extremism, violence, radicalization, discrimination and hate. Action must be taken upstream by implementing tools that defuse this process which is rooted in ignorance and the fear of others. In other words: prevention is better than cure.

MIL CLICKS: click intelligently!

© UNESCO

How many times do we click each day? Millions of times: to play, find information, read, watch videos, listen to music, share content, maintain relations with others, etc. all the while without being aware of the impact that these contents have on our lives or our way of seeing the world and sometimes without even being certain of their validity.

The use of the internet and social media therefore implies the need to develop new skills related to Media and Information Literacy (MIL).

This is why UNESCO launched MIL CLICKS, whose acronym stands for Critical thinking and creativity, Literacy, Intercultural, Citizenship, Knowledge and Sustainability. Its objectives include teaching to evaluate information, identifying and finding reliable sources, and developing critical thinking and creativity.

For now, UNESCO's new initiative exists in English, Portuguese and Serbian and uses social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to disseminate and share advice, knowledge and resources to encourage users to acquire these MIL skills in their daily interactions.

"We wish to include this notion of learning and commitment so that everyone can learn to click in a critical and intelligent manner," says programme specialist Alton Grizzle.

"This commitment goes hand in hand with online users' contribution to peace-building and promoting tolerance, diversity, equality and freedom of expression."

Click intelligently and join the MIL CLICKS global community!

A visit from the Bear Lake People

In Canada's Northwest Territories, the Tsá Tué biosphere reserve has always been the homeland of the Sahtuto'ine, the "Bear Lake People". The region encompasses the Great Bear Lake, the last pristine Arctic lake, as well as part of its watershed. Having established their settlement on the left bank of the river, the Sahtuto'ine make their living from harvesting activities and tourism.

Preserved from pollution, the nature of the biosphere reserve, the healthy fisheries and the presence of several species including grizzly bears, caribou and moose throughout the hydrographic basin, constitute an absolutely unique ecosystem. Maintaining its integrity is essential for the Sahtuto'ine community and its culture.

The Tsá Tué biosphere reserve.

© UNESCO/Patrick Kane

Four representatives of the community visit Paris in April to share their stories and present their vision during an exchange on indigenous strategies for the safeguarding of sacred lands, traditional lifestyles and the sustainable use of lands.

The event, organized by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) and the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (UNESCO-LINKS) programme, takes place on 3 April at UNESCO Headquarters.

This is sure to be a memorable event of sharing.

Open educational resources are gaining ground

Universal access to knowledge and quality education (the fourth goal under the Sustainable Development Goals) is a necessary prerequisite for economic and social development, and intercultural dialogue.

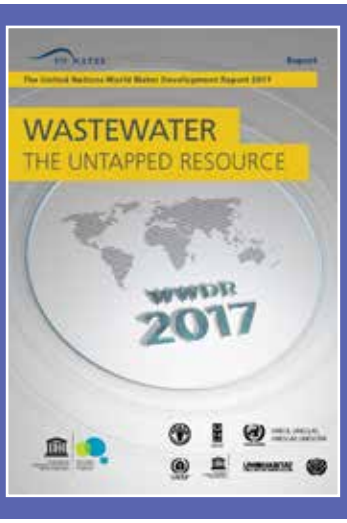
Open Educational Resources (OER) offer an unmatched opportunity to share knowledge and strengthen capacities. Textbooks, programmes, courses, videos and cartoons are all education materials that belong to the public domain or are published with open-content licences and can lawfully be used, shared, reproduced, and even adapted.

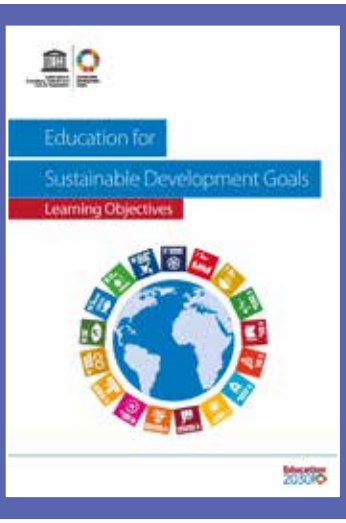
Over the last fifteen years, UNESCO has largely contributed to the development of OER, particularly through the organization of the 1st Global OER Forum in 2002 and the 1st OER World Congress in 2012. Additionally, UNESCO developed an Open Training Platform which offers more than 10,000 OER, designed to help with teaching and research.

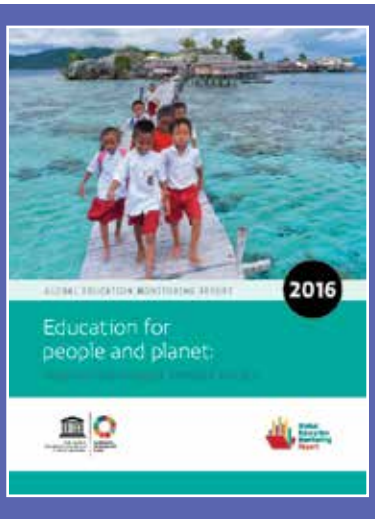
The 2nd Open Educational Resources World Congress (OER) takes place between 18 and 20 September 2017 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. To prepare for this, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), in partnership with UNESCO and the government of Slovenia, are organizing six regional consultation meetings: in Malaysia for Asia (December 2016), in Malta for Europe (February 2017), in Qatar for the Middle East and North Africa (February 2017), in Mauritius for Africa (March 2017), in Brazil for the Americas (April 2017) and in New Zealand for the Pacific (May 2017).

These consultations will address the topic, "OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: from Commitment to Action". They are aimed at measuring the implementation of the recommendations expressed during the 1st World Congress in 2012, exploring strategies and solutions to integrate OER in national policies, and encouraging more governments to publish open-licensing pedagogical material produced with public funds.

Books







The United Nations World Water Development Report 2017

Wastewater: the Untapped Resource

ISBN 978-92-3-100146-8
162 pp., 21 x 29.7 cm, paperback
45 euros

What if we were to consider the vast quantities of domestic, agricultural and industrial wastewater discharged into the environment everyday as a valuable resource rather than costly problem? This is the paradigm shift advocated in this year's World Water Development Report. It argues that once treated, wastewater could prove invaluable in meeting the growing demand for freshwater and other raw materials. In a world where demands for freshwater are continuously growing, and where limited water resources are increasingly stressed by over-abstraction, pollution and climate change, neglecting the opportunities arising from improved wastewater management is nothing less than unthinkable in the context of a circular economy.

Education for Sustainable Development Goals

Learning objectives

ISBN 978-92-3-100209-0
62 pp., 21.0 x 29.7 cm, paperback
Available on www.unesdoc.unesco.org

To create a more sustainable world and to engage with issues related to sustainability as described in the SDGs, individuals must become sustainability change-makers. They require the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to contribute to sustainable development. Education is thus crucial for the achievement of sustainable development, and Education for Sustainable Development is particularly needed because it empowers learners to take informed decisions and act responsibly for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations.

Global Education Monitoring Report 2016

Education for people and planet: creating sustainable futures for all

ISBN 978-92-3-100167-3
556 pp., 21.5 x 28 cm, paperback
45 euros

The new Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report by UNESCO, shows the potential for education to propel progress towards all global goals outlined in the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). It also shows that education needs a major transformation to fulfill that potential and meet the current challenges facing humanity and the planet. There is an urgent need for greater headway in education. On current trends, the world will achieve universal primary education in 2042, universal lower secondary education in 2059 and universal upper secondary education in 2084. This means the world would be half a century late for the 2030 SDG deadline.

Catch up on the conversation in the next issue of the *UNESCO Courier:*

Fragmented media and a disillusioned public

Fake news and real disinformation

Blurred lines between facts and opinions

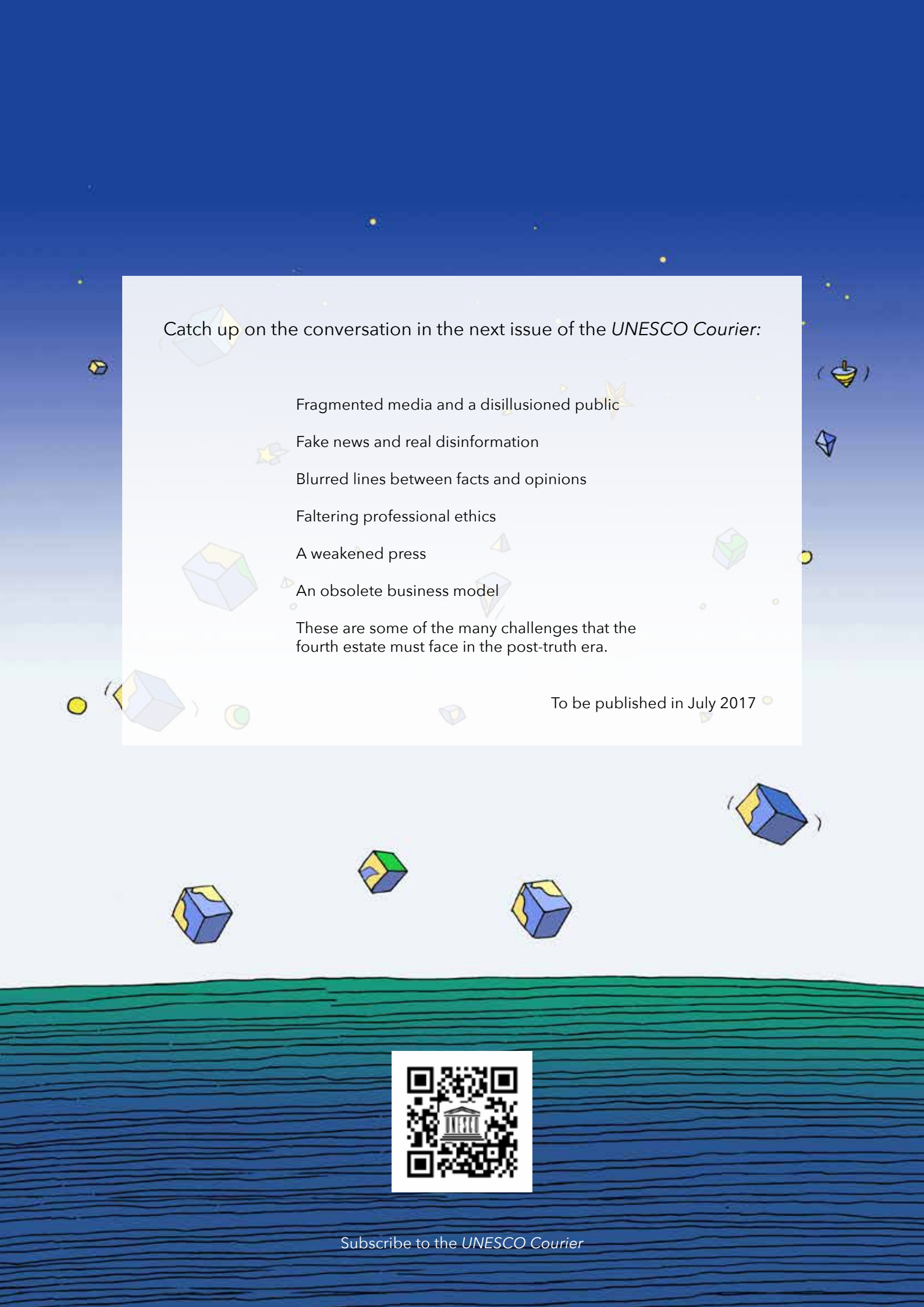
Faltering professional ethics

A weakened press

An obsolete business model

These are some of the many challenges that the fourth estate must face in the post-truth era.

To be published in July 2017



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